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AIMS OF THE JOURNAL

The *MJES* is a biannual refereed international journal with a regional focus. It features educational research carried out in Mediterranean countries, as well as educational studies related to the diaspora of Mediterranean people world-wide. The journal offers a forum for theoretical debate, historical and comparative studies, research and project reports, thus facilitating dialogue in a region which has strong and varied educational traditions. There is a strong international dimension to this dialogue, given the profile of the Mediterranean in the configuration of the new world order, and the presence of Mediterranean peoples in Europe, North America and elsewhere. The *MJES* is of interest to scholars, researchers and practitioners in the following fields: comparative education, foundation disciplines in education, education policy analysis, Mediterranean studies, cultural and post-colonial studies, Southern European and area studies, intercultural education, peace education, and migrant studies.

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Special issue:
Special and Inclusive Education
in the Mediterranean

Guest Editor: Helen Phtiaka

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Special Issue Articles

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM

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The 'Mediterranean Quest'

A t the beginning of the new millennium the extended area of the Mediterranean appears to be searching for a new life and to be seeking out a new existence. If we believe writers such as Todeschini (1996), Matvejevic (1996) Sultana (1996, 1998) and Mayo (1999) the old sea, and the 20[1] countries it presently unites, are looking for a new rejuvenated identity, a *Mediterranean Identity,* which will take them back to the communication and the unity of the millennium before Christ, when the Greeks considered it the centre of the world (*Mesogeios*, i.e. middle of the earth) and the Romans could justifiably call it *Mare Nostrum*. It is then time for individual Mediterranean countries to begin to assert their distinct presence and to attempt to link with each other in a multitude of ways.

During the two intervening millennia the political emphasis – and not only that – has shifted to northern parts of Europe. Northern empires, such as the British one, came to replace the dominance of the South, and a novel concept of science has long abandoned its Greek roots and moved in western ways. Technology has equally moved on, retaining just the markings of the original Arabic numbers, departing from its geography. New empires are now being formulated on the basis of this new science and technology, empires who have exceeded in size and strength even the greatest of all the old ones, the British Empire, as their geography is no longer limited by maps: linguistic empires, commercial empires, technological empires which have no one single national identity but rather share – and impose – common 'values' or the lack of them. The old basin has long been demoted to an – often inappropriate (Miliani, 1996) – consumer of all this might: education, science, technology, goods, philosophies and religions.

Can we redress this balance? Need we do it? Why? How?

Why?

God, who appeared to be in the centre of the Egyptian cosmos, was replaced by man (*sic*) in the Greek tradition. What has replaced him as the new centre of

the world? How can we fail to see that it is the dollar? Everything seems to lead there and from there to nowhere. Old values which had acquired Gods' names and human faces in the Mediterranean religions of the past, such as love (as Aphrodite or Venus) and wisdom (as Athena) or family love and devotion (represented by Hera and Hestia) have long perished from the Pantheon of Gods, leaving little of value to fill a (wo)man's heart and to serve as a life purpose. It is precisely for this reason, for the reason that the new solitary deity has left our hearts and souls empty, that we need to resurrect the old Gods and Goddesses, realising, as we do, that their peril will soon signal ours. For no humans can, unpunished, retain for long a Godless existence.

In the same line, albeit in a very different mode, Sultana (1998) speaks of Mediterranean unity and collaboration as a matter of survival, and of the need to withstand – and obviously resist – the new circuits of imperialism in the interests of a culture of peace and, I would like to add, a meaningful existence.

How?

Miliani (1996, p.11) also seems perplexed by this issue when he rhetorically asks: 'Does not the mimicry of educational thoughts, whatever their origin, harm social behaviours and cultural habits specific to countries of the periphery?' We cannot but agree! However, it seems rather difficult – not to mention pointless – to start from scratch. As Miliani himself indicates (1996, p.5) 'development does not mean reinventing the wheel'. After all, what we now face as great western inventions are to a large extent an offspring of prime Mediterranean seeds. Building up on such notions, or, even better, watering them down with Mediterranean sea water, bringing out the forgotten principles and the old values, this is the way to proceed. We need not abandon precious germs of truth and knowledge where they can be found. We may simply enrich them with the human touch whenever possible.

I shall exhaust the rest of the space allocated to me in this introduction in an effort to draw a picture of such an example, making a synthesis of the papers that follow, although I am fully aware that my professional points of reference are not half as Mediterranean as I would wish them to be.

Special, integrational or inclusive education?

In 1971, in her ground.breaking book *The Empty Hours*, Maureen Oswin asked in passing: 'Junior-age children are open minded and eager to learn. Should they share their schools with handicapped children, so they all become familiar with each-other at an early age?' (Oswin, 1971, p.5). Thirty years later we can very

safely answer her: 'Yes, of course! This is exactly what they should do!' There have been in between a million answers. What was then a very advanced question for its time is now quite obvious: that the 'life' conditions Oswin (1971) describes in her book should never ever be allowed to exist for any child ever again, anywhere! More than that, it is now obvious that we have no choice *but* to encourage children with and without disabilities to co-exist if we are ever to expect that adults with and without disabilities are to do the same (Vlachou, 1997).

To come to this point of wisdom, the western world – in whose heart this question was generated thirty years ago (Oswin was writing in London of the early seventies) – went through a period of constant deliberation and change. Oswin (1971) offers a frightening testimony of umpteen wasted hours, umpteen wasted lives. Reading it today the book still reeks with pain in every page, even more so now perhaps, as we discover what we allowed to happen not so long ago. This testimony was quite possibly one of the reasons why the Warnock committee was set up in England in the mid-seventies to study the policy and practice of special education and make recommendations for improvement. This is at least Mortimore's view (Mortimore, 2000), which I took as a personal invitation to visit Oswin's book. It does not escape me that legislation for integration of children with special needs was already established in the United States in the middle of the seventies (*All Handicapped Children Act* of 1975), nor that the black and feminist movements before that had fought for the human and educational rights of the blacks and of all women (Zynn 1995; Robinson, 1998; Robinson, 2000). It is still a wonder to me how such pressure points meet at a given historical time to push for changes. But the important thing is that they do.

And so, in 1978 the Warnock Report (1978) was met with unparalleled glorious welcome (never bereft of criticism) not only by professionals and other interested parties in the place where it originated, but also in Europe and in a number of countries which had a relationship with the U.K. worldwide. It introduced for many people the issue of the integration of children with special needs in the ordinary schools. Its most original idea, that of the continuum of needs, broke – theoretically at least – a long tradition of separatism in special education. For once it became questionable whether those different children were indeed all that different from the rest of the children, from the rest of us. It was a severe blow at the 'them and us' attitude and all the 'them and us' policies. In 1981 a good number of the suggestions made in the Warnock Report became legislation in Britain, the 1981 Education Act (DES 1981). Is it a coincidence that the same year was chosen by the U.N. to celebrate Disability? Financial, political and other interests should not be overlooked in this process if we wish to be realistic about what happened and why (Tomlinson, 1982). Nevertheless, the 80's, the lean, mean eighties which seemed in political terms to reclaim all the achievements of the sixties and the seventies, the

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eighties of the Reagan and Bush administration, the eighties of the Thatcher kingdom, the eighties which reached their climax with the fall of the Berlin wall, saw special education moving ahead with vast steps such as it had never done before, in a number of countries, justifying people like Tomlinson. Tomlinson had argued (1982, p.173) that professional worries about the future of special education following the Warnock Report and the 1981 Education Act, were unduly pessimistic as 'the social, political, economic and professional vested interests which have dictated the growth and development of special education have not disappeared, and the control of decisions and money by individuals and groups remains'. Her prediction (Tomlinson, 1982, p.172) was that 'special education, in changed forms and rationalised by changing ideologies, will continue to expand and become a *more* (emphasis original) important part of the whole educational system. This is exactly what happened.

By the end of the decade, and even before that in countries which had had an early start such as the USA, research evaluating the implementation of the integration of children with special needs in the ordinary classroom started bringing home disappointing news: integration did not seem to work, it was facing enormous difficulties, it was met with suspicion and prejudice from teachers, parents, pupils (Gresham, 1982; Lewis & Lewis, 1987; Lewis & Lewis, 1988; Lambropoulou & Padeliadu, 1995; Padeliadu, 1995) etc. But of course! How else could it have developed when it was not accompanied by the budget (and the other preparation) necessary to implement it? How else could it be perceived when it was used (by the British government at least) as a money saving exercise?

It was the perceived failure of the integration movement that brought about the inclusion movement in the nineties (Ware, 1995; Vlachou, 1997). We were much wiser by then. We knew that:

1. integration requires strong financial support (Padeliadou, 1995)
2. it cannot be implemented without adequate preparation (Vlachou, 1997)
3. it is not – or should not be – merely concerned with technicalities (Barton & Landman, 1993)
4. but most importantly, it has no chance of succeeding if it is not seen and handled as a broader educational reform that matters to the education system as a whole (Barton, 1997).

It is (apart from not receiving proper support) *because* integration had initially such a limited scope that it failed. It is because it was seen almost as an act of generosity to a small group of children, that it caused so many problems; to them mainly, but also to others and to the system. It is because it was a grand-child of the benevolent humanitarian model (Tomlinson, 1982) and a child of the medical

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model (Solity, 1992) that it collapsed. The discourse supporting it was 'the wrong type of discourse' as it were. And so the birth of inclusion was necessitated.

The inclusion movement comes from a very different tradition (Phtiaka, 2001). It is a natural descendent of the human rights discourse. It claims that it is a human rights issue whether all children have the right to be educated in the same premises, therefore gaining access to the same curriculum, the same educational and the same employment opportunities (Barton, 1997).

Not that this right was a given! It had to be won over for working class children (comprehensive movement in the 70's in England) (Phtiaka, 1988); it had to be won over for girls (co-educational movement at about the same time) (Phtiaka, 1997); it had to be won over for black children even very recently in South Africa (Naicker, 2000). It had to be fought for and won over the world over, and it still has to, as children in many parts of the world, the Mediterranean included (Sultana, 1999), have no access to education what-so-ever. It also has to be fought for and won over for disabled children around the world, known from the late seventies as children with 'special educational needs' (Warnock Report, 1978).

This extension of rights appears to be much less convincing to a number of people. The abundantly racist and sexist 'scientific' claims of the 50's about the inferiority of black intelligence or the lightness of the female brain could not be uttered today without risking a law-suit. However, the long, strong hold of medicine and psychology over disability, and the undisputed reign of the medical model for over two hundred years in some countries (in the UK since 1760), ensures that public and professional opinion have enormous difficulty in perceiving disability the same way they perceive race and gender. While it would be unthinkable to perpetuate racist and sexist laws and attitudes in the education of blacks and women by maintaining such ridiculous claims as the above, the opinion of professionals is still very much the most important single source of information on which decisions are based regarding the education of children with disabilities. Not their own views, not their parents' nor their advocates'; the professionals' who might have met them once in a lifetime for half an hour or so (Ware, 1994). This been the international scene at large, let us now see what is happening in the Mediterranean region.

Special and inclusive education in the Mediterranean

What has traditionally been called 'Special Education' has for decades in the past been an experimental ground for mainstream education, opening and closing like a safety valve to let steam out of the mainstream system and to allow changes in policy and practice to take place there (Tomlinson, 1982; Whitty, 1984). In the

last quarter of the 20th century special education has acquired a very strong special momentum of its own, partly because of growing professional interests in the field, partly because of the maturation of the disability movement and partly because of the growth of parental pressure in the area. In an era of changes, this is the educational area that has been the object of the most changes of all (Barton, 1997). It has changed its name, its terminology, its structure, its basic philosophy, its legislation, its policy, its practice (Riddel & Brown, 1994). It has been visited and revisited *ad nauseam* by professionals, administrators, legislators, politicians, parents. It has been shaped and reshaped and reshaped again responding to changing ideologies and external pressures (Barnes & Oliver, 1995). We are now at a time when all the previous formations of special education coexist in a peculiar embrace, and old terminology is found next to new terminology confusing the issues (Corbett, 1994).

All this is still taking place in countries that have had a long tradition in special education, old, fully industrialized societies mainly in the North-West Europe. Not surprisingly then, this is exacerbated in countries where many different notions were introduced simultaneously and in a hurry, Greece (Vlachou, 1995) and Cyprus (Phtiaka, 2001) being two obvious examples. What is happening in the Mediterranean overall? Has the new terminology permeated the old basin? Is it accompanied by a new philosophy, a differentiated practice, a newly introduced legislation?

It is apparent in the seven papers which follow that philosophy, legislation, terminology and practice in special education are battling it out just as much in the Mediterranean as they are in North Europe and elsewhere. Similar – and even greater – confusion and misunderstanding is observed here, as foreign ideologies and practices are imported and applied before the society is ready to accept them. What is the result? Usually a big gap between rhetoric and reality. Unfolding aspects of the history, legislation, policy and practice of special education in Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Malta, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey[2] gives us a very good idea of the more general educational changes which are shaping the Mediterranean in the dawn of the new millennium and will provide us with a useful insight of how each country is dealing with concepts and practices that have originated elsewhere and been transported here. It will also give us a glimpse into the future and allow us to speculate what is coming for all children in the new millennium.

Taking it one at a time...

The papers contained in this issue extend from one to the other end of the special and inclusive education spectrum, covering a wide range of disciplines, perspectives and philosophies. This is reflected among others:

1. in the disciplines represented
2. in the methodology followed
3. in the terminology used
4. in the philosophies outlined

We shall examine these parameters one at a time...

Disciplines

Psychology has for a very long time been the undisputed queen of special education, reigning with supreme confidence in the area, and virtually determining philosophy, terminology, research methodology and, most importantly, priorities and values. Given its very nature, psychology has naturally concentrated on the individual and what has been considered an individual problem. When and where abused, this emphasis has led to pathological interpretations of disability and special education, which have in turn led to a fatalistic attitude about what can be achieved 'given a child's I.Q. test' or later 'his/her pathological environment'. Greece and Turkey are represented here by psychologists, although the authors of these papers seem to be more concerned with family support than they are with diagnosis. Israel's paper is also written by psychologists and seems to pay a lot of emphasis on diagnosis and categorisation, indicating the strong hold of the discipline in the area. Finally the Maltese paper comes form a psychologist, who is however – unusually – much more interested in education policy rather than traditional 'psychological pursuits' in special education. It could therefore be argued that Psychology is still in the Mediterranean the dominant discipline interested in the subject of special needs, but within it the emphasis has shifted considerably to include approaches other than those of the traditional medical model.

Sociology, represented here by Cyprus, Spain and Slovenia, is a discipline that has a history of involvement in special education of only about three decades. Its influence in the area has been considerable. It has helped make a shift from a pathological individualistic approach, concentrating on the 'problem' or the 'handicap', to an approach emphasising social response to, and social construction of, disability. Its discourse has been facilitated by disabled academics operating in the area of sociology of education or disability studies. They have offered strong evidence from within that difficulties caused by the disability itself are negligible compared to difficulties created by social, educational, employment or other discrimination. Judging from the papers included in this issue, the sociological

approach to special education is growing strong in the Mediterranean, as it is in Northern Europe.

Education is also – evidently – represented here, as a number of scholars writing in this issue, Cyprus, Israel, Slovenia and Turkey, regardless of discipline served, are based in Departments of Education. This is important. Education, being an applied discipline, needs to operationalise philosophies and findings from other disciplines in order to formulate teaching instruments that will facilitate learning for pupils with special educational needs without discriminating against them. It also needs to utilise in initial teacher training and in-service activities, not only the practice, but also the principles of special education as it evolves to become inclusive and embrace the whole school population.

The involvement of so many disciplines in the area of Mediterranean special and inclusive education also reflects international trends, and needs to be seen as a strength because it facilitates dialogue and exchange in policy and practice.

Methodology

The research methodology used in this issue ranges from traditional quantitative approaches such as statistical analysis of questionnaire data (Greece, Israel), to purely qualitative approaches such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews (Cyprus). There is also policy document analysis (Malta, Slovenia, Spain) and finally some employment of historical approaches to education (Slovenia, Spain, Turkey). This wide range of approaches, unavailable in many other areas of study, indicates the complexity of the issue at hand. This complexity can only be served by engaging a multidisciplinary approach. It also gives the opportunity to weave a very rich and colourful fabric of the Mediterranean Education, such as is often difficult to do in other fields of study. In a subject that is as applied and sensitive as this, this is another important strength that needs to be utilized and built upon. Here too, it seems, the Mediterranean basin fully reflects the richness of special and inclusive education research around the globe.

Terminology

It appears that the use of terminology in the Mediterranean is as confusing and contradictory as anywhere else, perhaps even more so. Mainstreaming, integration and inclusion are used almost interchangeably, although they have

different meanings, and they certainly have different traditions. Mainstreaming and integration are – as far as one can judge in this ocean of diverse meanings – synonymous. Their only difference is that the first comes from the North-American tradition and the second reflects more the Anglo-Saxon/European tradition. The first is a product of the early seventies – because this is the time when the issue was first discussed and finally secured by legislation in the USA. The second is a product of the late seventies and early eighties because this is the time when such issues were raised in the UK with an immediate influence on other European and non-European countries. They both mean 'the placement of a child with special needs in an ordinary school'. This can be (and has been) done in a multitude of ways: full time, part time, for social purposes, for academic purposes, for all purposes, in some subjects, in all subjects, with or without support, with or without withdrawal, in special units, in the regular classroom, etc., but it always has the distinct feeling of uprooting a child from one place (usually the special school) and planting it into another (usually somewhere in the ordinary school). They are both the last descendents of the medical model, and part of their problem – which led to the need for new changes in terminology, practice and philosophy – is that they are seen as 'add-ons' and not as part of a broader educational change involving the whole education system, (save the technical arrangements for support of the 'special students' in the 'ordinary school').

Inclusion on the other hand is a product of a very different tradition. As it has already been pointed out, inclusion requires a complete restructuring of the education system that makes integration unnecessary for the simple reason that there are no un-integrated pupils. An inclusive education system, a natural product and a natural prerequisite of an inclusive society, does not discriminate on any grounds: certainly not on disability, but also not on race, gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, religion or whatever else is currently used to make school life unnecessarily difficult for some pupils. Inclusion is the ultimate test in democracy and as such it does not exist yet, except on paper, in any country known to me, in any country described here, and certainly not in the Mediterranean at large where Democracy was certainly born but has since been constantly put to the test, not least by external interests (Sultana, 1999). This is reflected in almost all the papers of this issue where inclusion is often used inter-changingly with integration and mainstreaming. Having said that, it is perhaps true that the Mediterranean countries, all being well, are the ideal context for inclusive educational paradigms, as they are still comprised of very inclusive communities, for example small rural villages, almost unknown to most developed countries of the North. Another reason for my optimism is the fact that professionals do not, as yet, have such a strong hold over Mediterranean communities as they have in industrialised

countries. It is still to an extent a matter of negotiation between the community and the new abrasive professional organisations, on what and on whose terms this relationship will develop.

Philosophy

The philosophy held by each writer contributing to this issue, is of course underlying his/her discipline, methodology and terminology. There is overall a consistency between all four parameters. Positivist philosophy, for instance, adheres to a particular research methodology and a particular terminology and relates to specific disciplines. With these criteria in mind, we can discern here three types of philosophy: an inclusive philosophy, a separatist philosophy, and a transitional philosophy from the latter to the former. This, again, is not surprising as it reflects the international situation which informs regional thinking on the one hand, and relates to the disciplines involved on the other. An inclusive philosophy however seems to be the ultimate goal for all the papers (and all the countries involved?) even if authors and countries are at different stages of development along the continuum from segregation to inclusion, and even if inclusion is still an almost utopian goal for most of us. It cannot be overlooked that the meeting of such a diversity of philosophies, disciplines and methods has in the past caused fierce fights and antagonism in the area of special and inclusive education. To this day, conflicts in methodology and philosophy inhibit publication, and thus dissemination of knowledge and views in the area. This is a real problem and needs to be pointed out. It is also a problem that has been avoided in this issue, as described above. To solve it we need not all shift paradigms or, worse, for the sake of compromise arrive at a hybrid that has the disadvantages of all approaches and the advantages of none. What would be useful for the Mediterranean countries to do regarding special and inclusive education is to learn from each other and to utilise each other's paradigms that are likely to fit our 'climate' much more than northern paradigms have done in the past. In this sense we shall soon come to appreciate that inclusion also becomes these lands far more naturally than colder areas where it has been talked about much more and been practiced much less.

Epilogue

I have attempted in this introduction to:

1. set up the broad international context for special and inclusive education
2. clarify the concepts involved and the terminology used

3.   identify notions which unite and divide special and inclusive education around the globe
4.   examine how these notions are mirrored in the papers that follow and consequently in the Mediterranean countries

I am conscious that I have perhaps over-emphasised the broader international against the Mediterranean context. If this is the case, this is proof that more issues such as this are needed. North America, Northern Europe and less so Australia, is where the discourse of special and inclusive education was born and bred. The only guarantee that we shall not be forced to rely on foreign discourses for our own analysis in the future, is to create our own.

Notes

1.   The 20 countries implied here are in alphabetical order: Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia & Turkey.

2.   A call for papers was sent around a wide network of scholars in the Mediterranean when this special issue was first planned. These are the countries that responded to the call for papers, or joined in soon afterwards, and retained their interest through drafting and re-drafting. It is very unfortunate that Arab countries are not represented here. It is hoped that other Mediterranean countries will feature in future issues. Of course a rich variety of special education papers relating to Mediterranean countries are also hosted regularly in other issues of the *MJES*.

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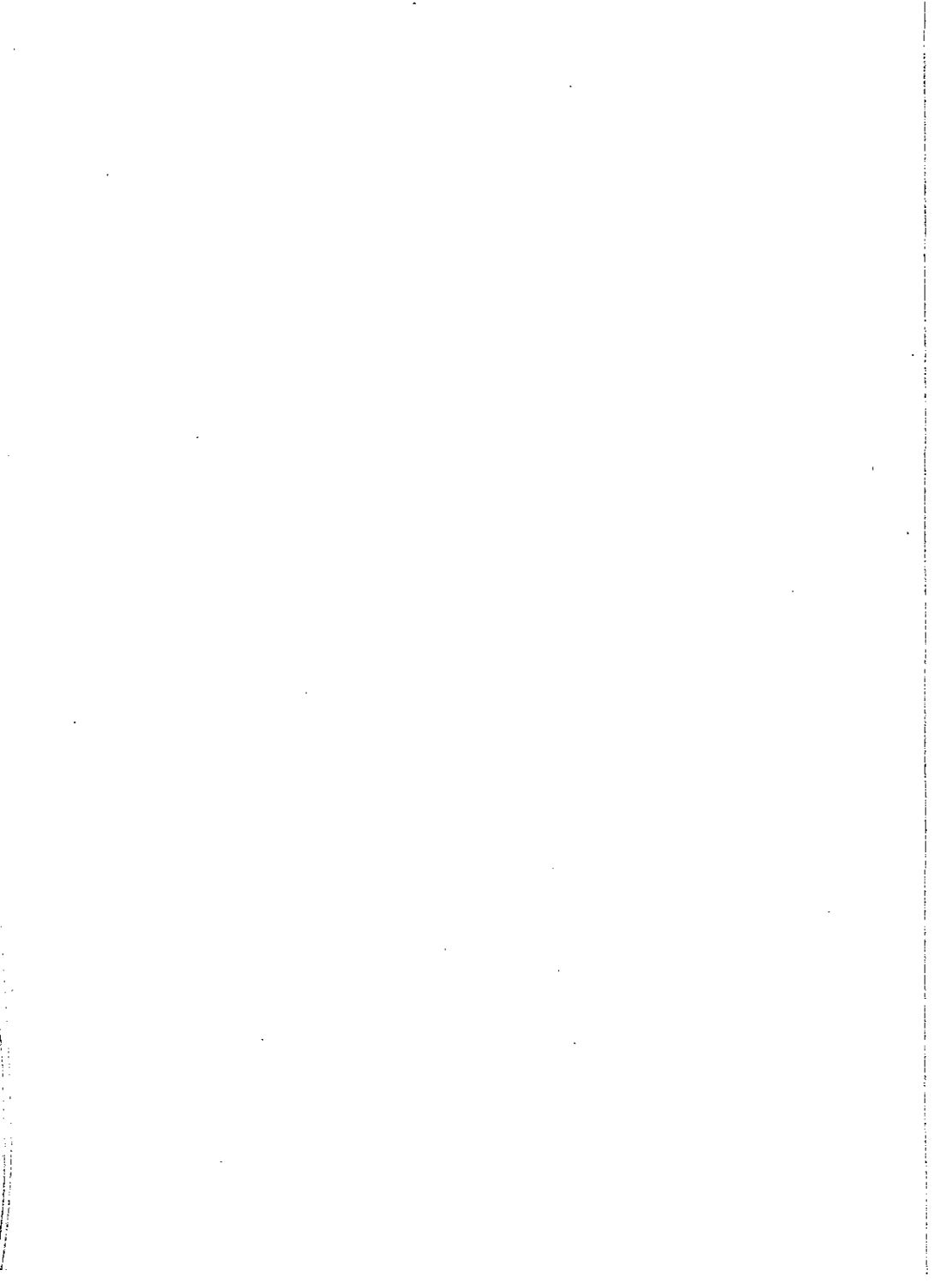
THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION: THE TURKISH PERSPECTIVE

FÜSUN AKKÖK

Abtract – *This paper summarises the past, present and future prospects of Special Education in Turkey with reference to the legislation and attitudes in society. The aim of this paper is twofold: initially, to provide a historical overview of the governmental and official provisions initiated and developed in relation to the needs and demands of the individuals with special needs in Turkey. Following this, societal perspectives and the attitudes of the Turkish society of the individuals with special needs and 'Education for All' is discussed and future prospects are proposed.*

Introduction

*T*urkey is a country in constant flux, with important changes taking place at the social and economic level. Such transformations have triggered off developments not only in the socio-economic structures of society, but also created new needs in the spheres of science and technology, needs which have posed new challenges to education, which is increasingly having to respond to a broadening and diversified range of expectations. To meet these expectations, reforms have been initiated at different levels and in different fields, while new institutions have been set up and new programmes have been developed. The developments and initiatives in the area of special education will be the focus of this paper.

The aim of this paper is twofold: first, it will provide a historical overview of the governmental and official provisions initiated and developed in relation to the needs and demands of the individuals with special needs in Turkey. Secondly, it will focus on societal perspectives and the attitudes of Turkish society regarding individuals with special needs and the *Education for All* movement.

The Turkish educational system and the history of special education in Turkey: a synopsis

The policies and the strategies that concern national education are determined and executed through the government programmes, with the Turkish National education system consisting of two main parts, namely, 'Formal Education' and 'Non-formal education'. Formal education is represented by the school system

and is made up of four levels: pre-school education, primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. Non-formal education covers the education and training system that provides employment opportunities to those citizens who have never followed formal education (or who are presently not in formal education, or have left formal education). The *Education for All* objectives and targets have been defined on the basis of several target dimensions. These dimensions are summarised below:

- Expansion of activities in early childhood care and development is within the domain of pre-school education.
- Progress in learning achievement is among the objectives and targets of primary education.
- Full development of primary education by the year 2000 is within the domain of primary education.
- Having the values, skills and knowledge necessary for a better life acquired by more and more individuals and families through all possible channels of education is within the domain of non-formal education.

Within the details of the targets listed above, '...providing equal educational, and social opportunities for all children, considering the individual differences, love and affection without any discrimination, and never assessing penalties' and '...carrying out actions aimed at realising education activities that respond to the needs of children who have different qualities and have these students receive education together with other children' summarise the Turkish perspective on mainstreaming and inclusion, the terms used interchangeably by the Turkish government for the actions summarised (Ministry Report, 1999).

Based on the above framework, the history of special education in Turkey can be traced back to the 1880's, when two special schools for children with visual and hearing impairment were established. Until the 1950's, with a few schools here and there, a department within the Ministry of Education tried to serve a small group of children with special needs. After that time, there was a new perspective and a rapid change in the educational system and support in various spheres of the governmental and public sectors. Special schools and classes became part of the educational system. In relation to this, society and the government started to develop increased awareness and sensitivity towards the needs and demands of children and individuals with disabilities and to a small extent towards their families. As a consequence, in the 1961 constitution, specific items were added in regard to the implementation of the services for individuals with special needs. This Act promoted the preparation of the rules and regulations for the educational provision for children with special needs. However, the philosophy of *Education*

for All and inclusion movement were not clearly understood within the state and public sectors.

Up to that time there was no trained personnel in special education and related fields. In one of the leading Teacher Colleges, a department was established to train students and teachers in the area of special education. In the second half of the 1960's a group of educators were sent to the United States to get further training on becoming trainers of teacher educators for children with special needs. Different departments in various universities started to offer undergraduate and graduate degree programmes for specialisation in the field. With the latest modifications of the Faculties of Education in 1998, programmes offering degrees in the education and training of individuals with hearing impairment, mental disabilities, visual impairment, multiple disabilities and the gifted and talented were opened in many Universities. In the Turkish constitution, there are items with regard to the principle of *Education for All*, emphasising the role of the State in the process. In 1983, a further major step was taken. Inclusion was accepted as an important means of provision. 1993 was nominated as the year of Special Education, aiming to raise awareness and consciousness for the needs of individuals with special needs. This attempt initiated the following developments:

— Turkish media and television started to pay more attention to the needs and services of this group of individuals. In this way they have been contributing to the awareness-raising process, without, however, always offering the most appropriate messages.
— The number of special schools in Turkey climbed up to 150. All State schools were encouraged to make modifications for students with physical and orthopedic needs. Moreover, the Ministry of Education increased salaries for special education teachers at a rate of 50%.
— Along with these awareness-raising efforts, an individual with visual impairment was appointed at a high civil service post in the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, student teachers with special needs began to be hired as teachers, unless, that is, their disability hindered their teaching.
— Moreover, in 1992, the mainstreaming and inclusion provisions were modified for improvement. Some pilot schools were chosen and the teachers, students, administrators and parents in those schools were provided with training on how to facilitate the mainstreaming process and to develop it effectively.

Meanwhile, with national and international meetings being organised, better means for exchange of ideas and new experiences were made possible. On the other hand, efforts for the vocational development and career opportunities of

individuals with special needs were initiated. Vocational schools were established for this purpose. For gifted and talented children at elementary school level (which is an 8 year mandatory school period), pilot centres were established to conduct special programmes. However, this is still a neglected group in Turkey and few opportunities have been developed for gifted and talented children at the elementary school level. However, for those who are gifted and talented in science or different branches of art and music, there have been many special schools operating for many years.

A new provision was made for hospital-bound children, with the initiation of hospital schools, which today number 26 in 13 cities.

The special schools serve the needs of the following groups:

− Children with visual impairment
− Children with hearing impairment
− Children with orthopaedic and physical impairment
− Children who are gifted and talented
− Children with mental disabilities

Today, the quality and the quantity of the special education provision in Turkey can be gauged on the basis of human development indices.

Parental involvement

The importance of parental involvement and parental training and counselling for families of children with special needs became apparent in the first half of the 1990's. The author of this article initiated such services in Turkey, both as topic for academic study and as a public service (Akkök, 1994). As a consequence of this, parental organisations and support groups were established by parents. As active parents, they started to inform both the wider public and the relevant state sectors about the characteristics, educational and life needs of their children and about their own needs. Parents have contributed significantly and distinctly to the quality and the quantity of the services in Turkey and they continue to do so. The associations and the foundations established by parents and the non-governmental organisations initiated new programmes − such as early intervention − and have been striving hard to contribute to changing societal attitudes. One area which, as in many other countries, is still underdeveloped, is that of catering for the siblings of children with special needs. This is an important area, which needs to be examined and supported more strongly.

Early intervention programmes

Early intervention programmes for babies and children at risk are still at their inception. Academics and other professionals have been developing and conducting effective programmes, even though this is not, for the time being, at the level desired and needed. In a pioneering work (Sucuoğlu, Küçüker & Kobal, 1998) involving 23 infants/young children and their parents, children showed marked improvements in the targeted skills, and parental needs decreased.

1997 could be mentioned as a major year for the reorganisation and updating of governmental provision in this area. Parental involvement in educational provision, individualised educational programmes, the importance of early intervention and the effective implementation of inclusion were the major areas of focus in the Act 573 of 1997. With this Act, Turkish legislation and policy seems to be at a very similar level to that of countries with well developed services around the world (Ministry Report, 1999). But, what about societal attitudes and implications of all those well-designed policies? This will be the theme of the next section of this article.

Is legislation sufficient for attitudinal change in society?

We are all aware of the fact that the quality and the quantity of services in a country is directly proportional to people's ideas and the attitudes in that society (Gargiulo, 1985). In Turkish society, the majority of the people do not concentrate on the strengths of individuals with special needs but focus more on their weaknesses. Most people still use labels for these individuals and concentrate on their differences rather than the similarities they share with the rest of society.

Whenever teacher attitudes have been examined, they appear to be positive towards inclusion. They are however characterised by a definite lack of information and training on how to educate students with special needs. This, unfortunately, leads to a mere physical integration of those children within educational settings (Batu, 1998; Diken, 1998).

When we examine which are the important values and norms in Turkish society, being protective, nurturing and affectionate seems to be the valued and accepted norms (Kağitçıbası, 1990). Based on the socialisation process, we therefore expect Turkish people to be tolerant, nurturing and affectionate towards individuals with disabilities. However, due to lack of information regarding the causes, the characteristics and the needs of individuals with special needs, and also due to lack of knowledge on how to approach them, many segments of society still exhibit a bias and are less inclusive towards them. Informing the Turkish society

of the similarities between disabled and non-disabled people is still a priority in many programmes of governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Furthermore, when the value priorities of Turkish adolescents were examined in the 1990's, Turkish adolescents seemed to prefer autonomy, self-reliance and a positive relationship with the environment. They seem to be more sensitive towards their ecological environment. Therefore, in the near future, more positive attitudes towards their environment and issues such as individual differences in this environment are expected (Imamoğlu & Karakitapoğlu Aygün, 1999). In relation to this, Turkish adolescents are expected to develop a better awareness and sensitivity to the differences in society and to support provision for inclusion.

Moreover, although many adolescents are dependent on their parents in Turkey, particularly with regards to financial matters, there is a changing trend for adolescents to be more independent, both economically and socially. Therefore, being less productive or dependent – something that disabled people often are – may also influence their attitudes and perceptions of other people in society. However, Turkish adolescents appear to value self-development (Imamoğlu et al.,1999). Based on this, individual needs for self-development of people with special needs are expected to be respected. Towards this end, the Turkish state initiated short term vocational training programmes for individuals with disabilities, so that they could become more productive members of society.

The general economical trends and priorities of a nation set the stage for the quality and the quantity of the services developed for individuals with special needs. In our country, the general economical trends and conditions are determining factors in that respect. The government must reconsider the financial resources and their distribution in regard to the public sector education, the money needed for buildings, equipment and teachers' salaries. This seems to be an important issue in Turkey regarding the improvement of the quality and the quantity of services for children and individuals with special needs. Early childhood care and early intervention seem to be at a fair level. In order to achieve better results however, better policies and practices for early intervention programmes and for parental education and involvement should be promoted.

The present author strongly believes that if general public knowledge in relation to exceptionalities is improved and stimulation of local community action for selp-help schemes is emphasised, Turkish legislation and societal attitudes will be in a better accordance with each other.

For the new millennium, a good starting point would be to encourage friendships and mutual respect between all children, with and without disabilities.

We all believe that children with special needs are first and foremost children, and then children with special needs (Akkök, 1997). Therefore, teaching all children to understand, accept and respect difference in disability, colour, social origin, nationality and religion would be a very meaningful starting point for everyone. Since children are our future, a very significant policy would be to accept this as a main premise in our educational processes. Through this, we may enable children to be full participants in the development of their community and society.

Furthermore, it is clear that acceptance and implementation of the stated policies is needed in the new millennium both at State and community level. This is due to the fact that despite the fact that clear policies have been developed in Turkey, there is still the need for these policies to be better understood, accepted and implemented by the community. In order to achieve this, education will continue to play a significant role in the future. There will be a greater need for curriculum flexibility, physical accessibility of all settings, trained teachers, ongoing teacher training and additional support for teachers if they are to meet the newly faced requirements of children with special needs. In the new millennium, information technology will definitely help overcome many barriers and promote better practice.

Since the author perceives parental empowerment and parental activism as a very effective means for a societal change of attitude, providing services, support and advice for parents with and without children with special needs is expected to be an effective agent of change for the quality and the quantity of services for children with special needs. In the new millennium, early detection of special needs and early intervention will have a major influence in promoting healthy growth and development. Early intervention measures may reduce the impact of disability on the child and its family.

Finally, our accomplishment for the future will be for ordinary schools to seek to accommodate all children, regardless of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic and other requirements, establishing social integration in preparation for a successful transfer from school to life. In this way we shall achieve 'Education and Productivity for All' at a universal level.

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EDUCATIONAL TRENDS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION IN SPAIN: THE CASE OF THE DEAF

ESTHER FERNANDEZ MOSTAZA

Abstract – *Following a brief account of Education and Special Education in Spain, I will start the paper by pointing out the different views of understanding deafness, both in hearing and deaf people. I shall then focus on the Spanish situation regarding the education models for the deaf, drawing a distinction between models regarding language (oralism vs. bilingualism) and models regarding education (special education vs. inclusive education). The paper will end with a vision of the education for the deaf paying special attention to the fact that school teachers and administrators have a very early and intense role in the lives of deaf children. It will point out that early intervention is a desirable goal, but carries some dangers regarding deaf children's social and emotional development.*

Introduction

*I*n almost every society on earth the child is regarded as a member of his/her parent's group. In that respect, deaf children occupy a unique position: they make up the only cultural group where the socialisation process takes place preferentially from child to child, rather than from adult to child. As a sociologist, this has been the aspect that initially attracted me towards the research I am presenting. Furthermore, as a sociologist interested in education, I was also attracted by the conceptualisation of deafness over time (that is, the way of answering the question what is deafness and what does being deaf imply?), and by the people involved in the education of the deaf. The intention of the present article is to focus on the fact that there are various ways to understand deafness and each of them inspires a syllabus influenced by specific aspects of understanding.

The Spanish education system

Bonal & Rambla (1999) in their article 'The recontextualisation process of educational diversity: new forms to legitimise pedagogic practice', present briefly the recent changes in Spanish education policy and the transformations that, over

the past two decades, Spanish education policy has undergone. Indeed, after a period of centrist government (from 1977 to 1982), which had to address the growth of educational demand, the arrival of the socialist government in 1982 brought about the introduction of a new culture of state intervention. Education became, for the first time in 50 years, a subject of public interest; successive regulations and expenditure policies aimed to overcome the former dual educational system divided into a private, mainly religious sector, and a poor one of inferior quality. During the 1980's, goals such as equality of educational opportunities, expansion of public education, democratic parental participation, professionalisation of teachers and quality of state schools became the central objectives that characterised state education policies and discourses.

Interestingly enough, socialist governments had to address the democratisation process in education while the rest of the advanced capitalist societies were cutting back on public educational and social expenditure. The simultaneous process of consolidation and the crisis of mass schooling in Spain, as in other Southern European countries, has led to a specific sort of policy changes. Education policy was thus marked by the contradiction between the need to meet very heterogeneous demands (arising from the high plurality of policy networks involved in private and public sectors at a regional and national scale) and the necessity to overcome traditional economic shortcomings.

This contradiction had to be addressed as Spain entered the European Union in 1986 and therefore its policy options were framed by the need to bridge the gap with northern European countries. From the mid-1980's, the Spanish educational policy had to face simultaneously the mandate of modernising (improving the quality of schooling to catch up with European standards) and democratising the education system. In 1987 the Spanish Ministry of Education launched the first proposal for a complete reform of the education system (MEC, 1987). Successive policy documents (like the White Paper published in 1989) initiated both the real and the symbolic educational change which was supposed to bring Spain into line with the most advanced European countries. To achieve this, both curriculum and school structure were to be changed.

The Education Reform Acts passed in 1990 (*Ley de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo,* LOGSE 1/1990) and 1995 (*Ley Orgánica de Participación, Evaluación y Gobierno de los Centros Docentes*, LOPEG 9/1995) culminated in this change. The following list summarises the most significant aspects that have changed formally:

- The extension of compulsory education until 16. Primary education has been fixed from 6 to 12 years old while secondary education has been divided into a compulsory track (from 12 to 16) and a post-compulsory one (16 to 18). The

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division between the academic and the vocational track is postponed until the age of 16. In addition, it is assumed that, although not compulsory, infant education (3 to 6) should be universally provided.

- A formal policy to re-examine the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. In the former system basic education finished at age 14 and provided different qualifications for achievers and under-achievers. VET was the only option for those who could not pass this basic educational level. In those circumstances, VET was not a valid option neither for family expectations nor for an employer's selection. The 1990 Education Reform Act abolished the double qualification system and established new compulsory secondary education (12-16). Past the age of 16 there is no qualification condition to pursue the academic or vocational track. The new VET system is now shaped by a 'new vocationalist' discourse based on a new relationship between education and work. The 'new worker' was to be trained according to the new challenges of the production system. The use of information technology, capacity for team-work, flexibility to move inside the labour market and eagerness to learn are skills to be taught.
- A significant reform of the curriculum structure and content, especially in compulsory secondary schooling was also taking place. The new secondary curriculum structure includes a basic common curriculum and a variable (optional) curriculum. Students are now able to choose 35% of their subjects from the options offered by their schools. Schools have the autonomy to decide what type of content can be offered as part of this variable curriculum. School decisions on curriculum must be based on a pupil's needs and interests. Some of the subjects can be designed to reinforce basic content, other subjects aim to widen some aspects of the common curriculum while others may be designed to introduce new specific content. In addition, the following cross-curricular subjects have to be included in the school content: education in equal opportunity, peace education, health education, environmental education, consumer education, moral education and traffic education.
- A major development of school autonomy in curriculum and economic decisions. Schools are followed to decide on the variable curriculum and have more freedom to allocate resources. The deregulation policy grants schools grater flexibility to search for supplementary to public funds.
- The introduction of a new teaching culture. New official and pedagogic discourses introduce a new reform language and the need to overcome former 'anti-pedagogic teaching styles. Schools were encouraged to change their teaching strategies towards a more child-centered education. Concepts like *curriculum adaptation, pupil context-based content, cognitive skills* and so on redefine the teaching style and require a significant retraining of teachers.

These changes represent the formal official state responses to the new educational mandate. For the first time since the restoration of democracy in 1977, the state has shown a capacity for actively defining what education should be.

Special education in Spain

In recent years a new understanding of special education and the students to whom it is directed has been taking shape. A number of different experiences in education – in this country and around us – have given rise to this change. There has been a series of conceptual changes of an educational and sociological nature which propose a different interpretation of deficiency and educational practices and consequently new schemes to improve the education of 'special students'.

The phrase 'students with special educational needs' suggests, according to Díaz-Estébanez and Valmaseda (1995), a new way of understanding education. The change has been from classifying students into two large groups – 'deficient' and 'normal' – and educating them accordingly, to adopting a scale or continuum reflecting the learning problems – temporary or permanent - which a variety of students manifest. The emphasis is placed on the capacity of the school environment to meet the educational needs which certain students have. The intention is to understand deficiencies in terms of special educational needs, and appreciate that each student, regardless of his/her personal characteristics, has the right to receive a normalised education. By 'normalised' we understand that which is carried out through the most normative means possible, in agreement with each culture, to bring about or maintain certain personal behaviour characteristics as near as possible to the cultural norms of the society where the person lives. (Wolfensberger, 1972, in Díaz-Estébanez &Valmaseda, 1995, p. 47).

Normalisation of people with deficiencies starts from certain basic principles:

a) The conviction that every person is able to learn and thrive in his or her personal human development.
b) Although physical integration in itself does not bring about social integration, it is nevertheless a necessary condition for this to take place.

The idea of special educational needs as well as that of normalisation appear to be closely related to the advantage of initiating activities with 'non-handicapped' friends. These interactions would favour social relations between students with and without handicaps and would likewise increase the social acceptance of the former in respect to the non-handicapped. An education for all adapted to the needs of each is the intention. This has allowed, since 1985, the

inclusion of the majority of these students in ordinary schools, where they can receive a normal education in the company of non-handicapped peers.

It is obviously difficult to disagree with these principles. However, they cannot be developed in a homogenous way for all students since different needs require different responses. In the case of students with hearing disorders there is a wide range of factors which must be taken into consideration when analysing their needs in order to come up with an appropriate response.

A word on terminology

A variety of terms have been used to describe the educational arrangements for children with special needs in recent years, such as 'integration', 'mainstreaming', and so on. In the case of Spain the change has been more one of words than one of meaning regarding this issue. Through the 1980's the process of integration (in Spanish *Integración*) became widespread and with it the closure of special centres. However, very often the term *integration* was interpreted in its simplest way, as a physical placement. The Education Reform Acts passed in 1990 (LOGSE 1/1990) introduced the concept of educational *diversity*; it was the response to the new educational culture which establishes new bases for understanding equal opportunities as well as quality of schooling.

The word *diversity* appears to be very helpful for improving education. A 'good' school must be flexible enough to attend to diverse needs and interests. Achieving equality is no longer offering the same curriculum and applying the same teaching strategies to everyone, but diversifying them depending on the pupil's profiles.

Another element which adds greater confusion is the linguistic one. It is very common to translate the Spanish word *integración* both to 'integration' when speaking in general terms and 'inclusion' when referring to education (i.e. 'inclusive education'). Moreover, we often retain the word 'mainstreaming' when we quote references from American authors. The three terms will therefore be used interchangeably in this text.

The case of the deaf

The case of the education of the deaf is especially interesting within the framework of special education for two reasons: firstly because the disability affects one of the special senses, impeding in the task of socialisation and making more difficult the natural communication between parents-children. (It has to

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be taken into account that 90% of the deaf are born into hearing families. Obviously, in the case of deaf children of deaf parents, deafness is not necessarily a handicap, because it does not interrupt the process of socialisation if there is sign communication, participation in and support by the deaf community).

Another aspect I also consider important is the tendency to begin education earlier for deaf children than for their hearing counterparts. This trend towards early intervention is seen as a positive influence, a 'head-start', for children with special educational needs. Thus, in the 'ideal' cases, school teachers, speech therapists, administrators and so on have an earlier and more intense role in the lives of deaf children, as compared with children in conventional educational settings. However, while early intervention may be a desirable goal, there are certain dangers in transferring a major responsibility away from the home. One danger is that the parents may experience a delay in feeling responsible and competent in relation to their own child, and these feelings may even be permanently affected. Another is that cognitive as well as educational tasks may be overemphasised for deaf children relative to their social and emotional development.

The social construction of deafness

Differences between hearing and deaf people are typically constructed as a simple matter of hearing loss. For most people this is the common sense of the matter: deaf people cannot hear, and all else about them seems to follow naturally and necessarily from that fact. As Bayton (1996) points out, the result of this assessment is that the relationship between hearing and deaf people appears solely as a natural one. However, the meanings of 'hearing' and 'deaf' are not transparent. As with gender, age, race, and other categories, physical differences are involved, but they do not carry inherent meanings. Therefore, they must be interpreted and cannot be apprehended outside of a culturally created web of meanings. In fact, the meaning of deafness has changed over time, although most hearing and many deaf people are not aware of this; it has, that is to say, a history. And since deafness is usually conceived by hearing people as merely a lack, emptiness where hearing and sound ought to be, 'the effect is that deaf people and their means of communication become blank screens for the projection of cultural prejudice, fear and hope, faith and ideology' (Bayton, 1996, pp. 1-2).

This is why it is possible to assert that deafness, as well as being a physical phenomenon, is also a cultural construction. In the first part of this article I would like to expose what I consider to be the hearing and what the deaf view of deafness.

The hearing view of deafness

For most hearing people, deaf people are incomplete. They are different but not merely that: their difference is also a deficiency (which is probably the shared characteristic of everything perceived as 'other'). Hearing is defined as the universal, and deafness, therefore, is an absence, an emptiness, a silence. Silence can represent innocence and fertility, and it can represent darkness and barrenness. In both cases it is empty, and in both cases it needs to be filled. Images such as light and darkness, society and isolation, sound and silence construct a hierarchical relationship in which deaf people are said to lack what hearing people alone can provide.

As Bayton (1996, p.25) points out, the absence that defines deaf people was framed as a place in which they lived: a 'Ghetto of Silence', a prison from which they could not without help escape, a blankness and ignorance that denied them humanity. Deaf people were trapped within this place of darkness, but the problem was not only that the deaf could not see out but that the hearing could not see in.

However, 'silence' is not a straightforward or unproblematic description of the experience of deafness. Two reasons may be presented: First, only very few deaf people hear nothing; most deaf have hearing losses that are not uniform across the entire range of pitch: they will hear low sounds better than high ones or vice versa. Sounds will often be quite distorted but heard nevertheless. And secondly, for those who do not hear anything, what does 'silence' signify? Unless they were once able to hear and then became deaf, the word is meaningless as a description of their experience. (Even for those who were once able to hear, as the experience of sound recedes further into the past, so too does the significance of 'silence' diminish.) In short, silence is experienced by the hearing as an absence of sound. But for those who have never heard deafness is not an absence.

This assessment brings us to another observation: As used by hearing people, 'silence' is a metaphor rather than a simple description of the experience of deaf people. Deaf people may use the analogy of visual clutter to understand noise, and blind people may use tactile sensations of heat and coolness to approach the idea of colour. Such analogies, in the absence of direct experience, can promote understanding because they juxtapose equally complex phenomena; neither is reduced by the comparison. On the other hand, hearing people may plug their ears and sighted people may close their eyes and then, speaking of silence and darkness, use these experiences to try to understand deafness or blindness. But these are metaphors: a complex set of cultural and social relationships is simplified into a concrete physical phenomenon: absence of sound.

It has been the hearing view of deafness that generally supports the tendency to concentrate the education of deaf pupils in the oralistic methods and minimise

the use of Sign language among deaf people. Oralists believed (and proved with some extraordinary cases of prelingual deaf children) that deafness could be redefined in such a way as to fully integrate deaf people into hearing society on an equal basis. They too believed in the almost infinite plasticity of human beings. If deafness were, indeed, nothing but a social construction, if deafness were merely a cultural creation, then this point of view would make sense on the basis of an abstract principle of rights and equality and proclamations of sameness.

The deaf view of deafness

Being deaf is, of course, more than a social construction. It means most fundamentally that one occupies a different sensory world from those who hear. In these terms I can summarise what I am trying to define as the 'Deaf view of Deafness'. According to the deaf view of deafness, an oralist approach means that many deaf people have access only to a limited or simplified language during the crucial early years of language development and education.

In the work of Reagan (1990), entitled 'Cultural considerations in the education of deaf children', we found an alternative model of deafness and deaf education. Rather than focusing on deafness as a pathological medical condition, he considers the deaf as an oppressed cultural and linguistic minority. The aim of this approach is to depathologise deafness. As Woodward (1982, p.7) has cogently put it, 'what is being attempted is to describe Deaf people from the point of view of Deaf cultural values [so that] differences between Deaf and Hearing people can be seen as cultural differences, not as deviations from a Hearing norm'.

The hearing view of deafness is concerned almost exclusively with the audiological features of deafness and, as a result, emphasises what the deaf person cannot do (or cannot do as a hearing person would do), in short, it assumes what might be termed a 'handicapped' or 'pathological' model of deafness. The deaf view of deafness, on the other hand, is concerned with social, linguistic, anthropological, and cultural aspects of the deaf experience. Indeed, given some hearing loss, the actual degree of hearing loss is not particularly important or significant within the Deaf culture.

Aims of the deaf children's education

Just as the category of 'deafness' is not fixed and absolute, neither is the category of 'disability'. It can be, and indeed has been, defined in a variety of different ways throughout history, within particular societies and in any given

social context. Before considering the ways in which the notion of disability is created (or constructed), I need to define what is meant by the term. This will indicate why it is far more common for hearing people to think of the deaf as disabled people rather than thinking of them as members of a cultural minority.

The label of 'disability'

Two decades ago, Wall (1979, p.35) pointed out that labelling a child as 'disabled' or 'handicapped' was based on an inevitable and somewhat dangerous simplification, based upon two very highly questionable assumptions. The first is that the mainly medical diagnostic labels are themselves reasonably precise and exclusive, suitable for categorising children for administrative purposes and for estimating prevalence. The second, less overt but more damaging in its consequences, is that these diagnostic labels are necessarily related to possible remedial physical treatment or to the likelihood of favourable psychological and educational development.

The fact of the matter is that most of the categories used are as much determined by the particular viewpoint of the specialist using them as they are by the causal nature of the symptoms on which they are based. They tend to be masqueraded as diagnoses when in fact they are descriptions or labels attached to a salient feature. It is probably as much because of this as for any other reason that estimates of the prevalence of any condition vary from country to country and from one study to another (Wall 1979, p. 36).

Labels of medical origin and medical diagnostic categories imply the use of the disease model – a pathological condition coupled with a physical remedy. This is, of course, often appropriate to the physical aspects of a handicap. There is however no direct or linear relationship between a physical condition and psychological or educational consequences and remedies. If such a relationship is assumed, openly or tacitly, it can easily result in a deterministic attitude as to what can be achieved in a disabled child's development.

Are deaf children taught to be disabled?

According to Marschark (1993) deaf children on average are relatively more restricted in their range of experience; they tend to have more concrete and informationally deficient linguistic interchanges with others, and do not have as many available sources of content and social knowledge as hearing peers. In a real sense then, many of the interactions observed between deaf children and their early environments appear to orient them towards the concrete, the

superficial, and the immediate. Such patterns held primarily for deaf children of hearing parents, especially the children of parents who – for whatever reason – had minimal or late communication with their children. Deaf parents on average are found to have greater expectations for and involvement in their children's education. They also follow and apply more consistent child-rearing practices. It is therefore difficult to separate child from parent related factors in the successes and failures of deaf children. 'We can be sure only that the two interact in a variety of ways, and then we can try to identify the dimensions that appear most salient in determining the course of psychological development in deaf children' (Marschark, 1993, p. 237).

Three factors now appear to stand out as having a crucial influence on deaf children's competence in dealing with the educational institution. One such factor is *early language experience* (Johnson *et al.*, 1989). All evidence from deaf and hearing children alike, regardless of its mode, points to the need for effective early communication between children and those around them. Obvious in some sense, the need for symbolic, linguistic interaction goes beyond day-to-day practicalities and academic instruction. The deaf children who appear most likely to be the most competent in all domains of childhood endeavour are those who actively participate in linguistic interactions with their parents from an early age. From these interactions they not only gain facts, but also gain cognitive and social strategies, knowledge of themselves and others, and a sense of being part of the world. In social as well as academic domains lack of ability to communicate on the abstract and the absent prevents children from realising their potential.

A second essential factor for normal development is *diversity of experience* (Tervoort, 1975; Watts, 1979). It is through active exploration of the environment and through experience with people, things, and language that children acquire knowledge, including learning to learn. The operating principles for development are unlikely to be innate. They derive from the application of basic perceptual; learning becomes a self-motivating and self-sustaining pursuit. In the absence of diversity there are no problems to solve and so no need for flexibility.

A third prerequisite for child development is *social interaction* (Calderon & Greenberg, 1993; Lederberg, 1993). The relationships of deaf children with others have frequently been characterised as impulsive, remote, and superficial. Deaf children with deaf parents and those whose hearing parents are involved in early intervention programmes, however, show relatively normal patterns of social development. Beyond the biological and cognitive functions of social interaction, children use such relationships to develop secure bases for exploration and to identify with others who are like them; moreover, they use others for instrumental and emotional support. Social relationships make children part of peer and cultural groups; they also lead to self-esteem, achievement motivation, and moral

development. Children who are denied such opportunities early in life because of child-related, familial, or societal factors cannot fully benefit from other aspects of experience.

The Spanish administration: the autonomous communities

The state of Spain currently presents administrative characteristics that affect legislative decisions in questions of education. Spain is organised administratively into 19 Autonomous Communities (AC's). Most of these AC's have had educational powers transferred to them; that is, they have the capacity to legislate and administer in educational issues, based upon general legislation that is common to the whole of the State. For example, decrees covering minimum levels of education throughout the country are drawn up by the Ministry of Education and, on the basis of these, each AC then develops its own basic curricular design. This explains why, even when the organisation of the educational provisions for deaf students has, in general terms, followed approaches put forward by Central Government, each AC has carried out its own interpretation and development thereof. This in turn has facilitated the emergence within the country as a whole of a wide range of significantly diversified educational responses to the needs of the deaf. In the study presented, while giving specific and concrete examples, I shall be referring to Catalonia.

One of the Autonomous Parliaments that has pioneered a reassessment of Sign language in the education of the deaf has, in fact, been the Catalan Parliament. The Catalan Parliament passed a Proposal (non-binding) for the Promotion and Diffusion of an Understanding of Sign Language (*Propuesta no de ley sobre Promocion y Difusión del Conocimiento de la Lengua de Signos*) (n. 228/16 May 1998), the text of which urged the Executive Council of the Autonomous Government, the *Generalitat*, to adopt bilingualism in the education of deaf children. The wording of this proposal was as follows:

There is a need to:
1. Progressively adopt bilingualism, spoken language and sign language within the ambit of education in Catalonia, as a means of integrating people with serious hearing deficiencies so that, in accordance with their specific educational needs, such people may have ever-increasing opportunities to gain access to society as a whole and to the worlds of employment and culture.
2. Maintain where possible, in accordance with assessment tasks and individualised monitoring by CREDA (the Centre for Hearing Deficiency Educational Resources), their schooling within the ordinary educational system.

3. Promote research into the issue of sign language [...]
4. Offer training courses in sign language [...]
5. Promote campaigns aimed at heightening awareness and providing information to the parents and tutors of this group with respect to what can be achieved by sign language and its applications on the educational system.
6. Initiate whatever action may be required so that the technique of interpreting signs is recognised within the ambit of professional or vocational training.

Another peculiarity of the Spanish State is that three of the 19 AC's have co-official languages: Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country. This complicates the question of the education of the deaf in terms of the approach taken, according to whether such approaches are in a monolingual or bilingual context. In Catalonia, the sign language used is LSC (Catalan Sign Language).

Brief historical account of the education of the deaf in Spain

It is interesting to know, if only superficially, the history of deaf education for two reasons (Bellés, 1995): Firstly because it seems that deafness has always being a 'puzzle' for the hearing. Secondly, it gives the opportunity to know the problems, worries and decisions in the education of the deaf. Many of the present day worries are similar to those of centuries ago. Nevertheless, knowing the history of the education of the Deaf enables us to find new answers to old questions.

In order to present a history of the deaf and of the institutions that have protected them, in the last two centuries, I will imagine someone with a significant degree of hearing deficiency, who has the power to travel through time. This person will begin the journey in Barcelona of the end of the 18th century, and will travel through various stages of the 19th & 20th centuries without leaving the confines of the city. At each stop, our imaginary friend will be educated for a number of days at the same educational centre, allowing for an assessment of the distinct educational offer presented by this centre down through the years.

The centre I have chosen for this special journey is the Pere Barnils CREDAC in Barcelona (known by different names at different times). As an institution, its history covers almost 200 years. For this reason the diachronic study of the various curricula followed at the centre helps us analyse the close relationship between the various concepts of deafness (according to each period) and the educational programmes that each of them have respectively generated.

The characteristics of this special person (intelligence, degree of hearing deficiency, etc.) will be constant throughout. But society, represented by the

school, will evaluate the repercussions of this person's deafness in ever-changing ways, because the concept of 'deaf' will differ from period to period. And so the educational needs required will never be understood in the same way. Here is the story of a truly unusual journey:

1799: The society that surrounds me considers the deaf to be incapable of receiving education. As things stand, I hardly need mention that there are no schools for the deaf in Barcelona.

1800: This year sees the first institutionalised educational experience for deaf boys and girls in the city, financed by the City Council. They refer to us, biblically, as wretched and miserable. The redemption of this spiritual misery, of these souls lacking in external projection is exactly what the school aims to achieve. Our educational needs, therefore, which certainly exist, are focussed on and satisfied by a study of the catechism.

1861: Our education continues to be seen in terms of a social charity. We are still those wretched, forlorn creatures. But the redemptive ideas that have always been our teachers' guiding light have started to take a more earthly turn, namely, in the direction of preparing us for life. The level of knowledge imparted is extremely basic, with no intention whatsoever of equalling the standards of those who can hear. Like our more fortunate fellows, we too are capable of being educated, but our expectations are far more limited.

1922: In recent years we have received our education in the school for the 'Blind, Deaf-Dumb and Abnormal', also known as the 'school for the defectives'. But now we go to our very own school, a fact that is due to the notion that each of the three groups has its own educational needs. This is the era of 'Defectology'; boys and girls are categorised by their 'defect' according to the labels corresponding to their deficiency. Now that we are no longer those pitiful souls, but rather a kind of 'sick' student (with a slight chance of being 'recuperated by society'), our educators no longer wear cassocks; instead they wear white coats, like doctors. Teaching has become 'scientific', and strictly 'oralist'.

1976: Throughout the 1970's an important change was in progress. Attempts were made to connect the curriculum followed in our special centre with the standards of the General Basic Education (EGB). Our teachers have begun to suggest that we should learn things at the same level as those without hearing difficulties. For the first time it has become conceivable that deaf people can study to obtain the Primary Education qualification.

1984: Throughout the opening years of the 1980's, the process of 'integration' has become more widespread. This in turn is bringing about the closure of special centres, as these do not provide us with one of the aims that have now become priority: our integration into society. These days we are known as 'students with auditive deficiencies' and we are still given the chance to become more 'normal' the closer we get to our general culture via the auditive-oral route.

1989: For some time now they have been trying to draw up a more diversified educational programme as a means of providing a qualified response to our individual needs. This involves trying to avoid large gaps in content and ensuring significant learning periods. Our chances are still limited, unfortunately, as we do not have sufficient spoken language skills: as educational levels increase for us, so do the difficulties. That is why they are trying to make the general programme adequate, but this translates into a highly schematic curriculum in comparison to that followed by our peers who do not share our hearing deficiencies. Some teachers start to use a bimodal resource with those of us who do not have strong oral abilities.

1993: The use of the bimodal resource has opened the door to considering the use of Sign Language without prejudices as a vehicular language and a language for instruction within the school. Unfortunately, we do not always know enough signs to follow ordinary programmes in as complete a way as we would like.

1999: The bilingual modality is being established in schools and we now learn LSC (Catalan Sign Language) from when we are very small children. The curriculum at the centre is divided into two ambits: The ordinary curriculum, which is developed within the classroom, with a deaf teacher competent in Sign Language, and the specific curriculum (Sign Language, written language and spoken language), which is developed in a specific group for the deaf. Furthermore, from the centre itself, there's a move to provide attention to our families who, in large part, do not have hearing deficiencies.

The journey through time has finished. In the section which follows I shall pay special attention to the legislative reforms and educational policies aimed at integrating deaf pupils, and the corresponding changes which have taken place in recent years in Spanish Deaf Education.

Legislation regarding special education in Spain

Spain is known to trail behind in the effort to integrate students with special educational needs into mainstream education. In the case of deaf pupils the effort

began almost two decades ago. We can therefore refer to one generation of deaf pupils who have completed their compulsory education within this system. There are now a few studies evaluating the results of this type of schooling in Spain (Marchesi, 1987; Fernández Viader, 1999). From them it becomes clear that while the concept of inclusive education was based on the desire to adapt positively to adversity and defend the right to education for all, the concept of inclusion was frequently unfairly interpreted for the deaf.

Even today the terms 'inclusive education' and 'physical placement' in the classroom are often muddled. Certain education policies which came to be considered 'inclusive' for the deaf neglected the importance of being able to engage in communicative and social interactions with equals, including other deaf pupils and deaf adult models.

To understand this change in the meaning of the term 'inclusive', first it is necessary to look at the situation prior to the generalised mainstream education in Spain.

The Integration Law and its effects on hearing-impaired students generalised mainstream education in Spain began in 1970 with the *Ley General de Educación* [General Education Law]. This law mentions for the first time the integration of retarded and disabled students into mainstream schools, with a view to their future inclusion into society in accordance with each case. The integration model which the law adopted, first assured the physical placement of these children. It stated that their education would take place in special centres only when their degree of difference made it absolutely necessary. All other students with disabilities would be offered the possibility of schooling within the regular system. From then on the organisation of schools with disabled pupils was modified with the intention of finding solutions supporting the goals of integration (Fernández Viader, 1999, p.194). As a result, many deaf pupils were schooled in hearing schools but under teachers who were hardly trained in deaf education. It is however certain that the application of the law introduced important challenges in special education besides changes in terminology. Instead of a deficit model arose a model of special educational needs. Nevertheless, and as it often happens, legislative changes preceded the preparation of the teaching staff and the updating of education techniques. The funds granted, especially those intended to support human resources, were insufficient to help achieve the objectives. Moreover, existing legislation on teaching appointments in the state school system frequently created obstacles when new teaching staff was introduced. This affected negatively any innovation that required specially prepared teachers in the subject.

In 1982, following the Italian experience which passed Law 517 on Integration in 1977, a new Law was passed, the LISMI – *Ley 13/1982 de Integración Social de los Minusválidos* [Social Integration Law for the Disabled]. This law declared

that all disabled children could attend a regular ordinary school in order to secure full equality and social integration in the future. The development of the law was complemented in March 1985 by a Royal Decree which supported progressive integration of pupils with special educational needs into the normal school system within an eight-year period. It begins with primary school ages and/or the first level of compulsory basic education and, year by year, proceeds with the remaining levels of compulsory education. The decree undertook the commitment to provide the means and the most favourable conditions for inclusive schools as teaching staff and parents expressed the intention to participate in the project.

It is worth questioning however whom the law refers to by the term 'pupils with special education needs'. In the Curriculum of Primary Education (*Generalitat de Catalunya, Departament d'Ensenyament*) the following classification has been established:

1. Those pupils who show problems in their development and/or learning difficulties significantly greater than the majority of their peers.
2. Handicapped or disabled pupils who find it difficult to use ordinary means available in the area schools for pupils of their age.
3. Pupils who due to family or social reasons are at risk of being included in category 1 and/or 2 if the necessary help is not provided.

As pointed out by Llombart (1994, 9ff), students with severe hearing impairment are included in category 1, that is, as pupils with cognitive and learning problems. But their supposed handicaps are not intrinsic limitations. There exists an external factor which has become a real obstacle in their development. This factor is the system failure to include Sign Language in their curriculum.

In any case, if sign language were not considered a normal resource, these pupils would have to be included in category 2. However, if, as it often happens in other countries, Sign Language is considered a normal skill for these students, the definition applicable is that of category 3. They become students with learning difficulties and possible developmental problems if the appropriate resources (sign language) are not supplied. So that's why the expression 'pupils with serious and permanent educational needs' is only true when the education solutions offered are seriously and permanently inadequate.

So since 1985, in order to provide options for the educational needs of the deaf, various types of schools have been organised:

- Special schools for the deaf;
- Special classrooms (full time) for deaf pupils in hearing schools;
- Special classrooms (part time) for deaf students in hearing schools;

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- Ordinary classrooms where a deaf student spends the whole day. There may be another deaf student in the same class but there is no deaf adult;
- Ordinary schools where a deaf student is the only deaf person in the school.

In addition there are several other variations among these categories. At the same time many schools for the deaf have been losing students and the majority of them are closing down. This has not occurred in a homogenous way throughout Spain because the development and interpretation of the law in each Autonomous Community has been different and also because each region has its own history of deaf education. Although there are cases where projects for inclusive education for the Deaf arose in the schools themselves, the majority were initiated and ordered by the Central Administration.

Moreover, certain educational administrative authorities interpreted the objectives of the Integration Law very broadly. Therefore, as Fernández Viader noted (1999, p. 196-197), 'all disabled children *may* attend a normal school' was often interpreted as 'all disabled children *must* attend a normal school'. Such an interpretation undermines the very intention of the law and violates the right of a child to be 'different', a right which the law is meant to respect and protect.

There is no doubt, as Diaz-Estébanez & Valmaseda (1995, p.46) have pointed out, that over recent years a new understanding of special education has taken shape. We have moved from the classification of students into two large groups, 'deficient' and 'normal' to the idea of a 'continuum' of needs indicating a diversity of learning problems – temporary or permanent. The emphasis has been placed on the potential ability of the school to meet the educational needs of the students. The ideal solution is to interpret 'deficiencies' in terms of special educational needs, while underlining that each student, independently of personal characteristics, has the right to receive a normal education.

So it is the professionals in the educational world – hearing people in great majority – who have the responsibility to define what the needs of each deaf student are. They decide on the means employed to satisfy these needs. This responsibility may become a kind of power as they decide what can and cannot be used. The danger is that they may promote solutions which please the hearing more than the deaf. The question remains: Can a hearing teacher think and act as a deaf person?

The Salamanca Declaration: new conceptions of deaf students

Since the passing of the Royal Decree in March 1985 there has been support for 'an education for all adapted to the needs of each'. The effort to apply this principle led the way to the placement of the majority of deaf pupils into

mainstream schools. They could receive normalised education along with their hearing peers. However, the great diversity among hearing-impaired pupils has not always been respected.

Simply stating that a deaf person suffers from hearing loss is not useful in educational terms; neither from a pedagogical viewpoint, nor a linguistic viewpoint, not even a sociological one. It appears more useful to distinguish between two groups of students with hearing deficiency: Those who are capable of acquiring oral language by auditive means through speech therapy and relevant technical support, and those whose degree of hearing loss does not permit them to acquire oral language by auditive means. They have to rely on vision as their principle means of communication and information access.

It is this second group of pupils – those with grave hearing loss – which presents the greater challenge for education, and constitutes the principle target of the bilingual education projects appearing in our country. To understand how and why such alternative solutions (i.e. bilingualism) are being created alongside the placement of deaf pupils in mainstream schools, we should return to take up the legislative argument.

After the Integration Law of 1982, the most common educational placement for the deaf during their initial stage of schooling was to place them into ordinary schools. Three types of curriculum modifications were made for each pupil: Curriculum Adaptations at the Centre, Curriculum Adaptations in the Classroom, and Individual Curriculum Adaptations. These 'adaptations' are still in force today.

There were a few teachers in ordinary schools who were especially involved with the hearing-impaired pupils, although official policy at that time did not include any credits in deaf training (they were incorporated in 1991). Perhaps this is why in various Autonomous Communities there had been developing teams for psycho-pedagogic assessment, support services and centres with specific resources to aid teaching staff with deaf pupils. In addition, teams of specialists were formed to provide direct attention to these pupils. The majority of these specialists, however, were clinically trained in deafness and consequently throughout the first decade of the law's application, assessment of the experts was mainly directed towards rehabilitation and speech correction.

Since 1993, as Fernández Viader has noted (1999, p.208), arguments which favour bilingual education for the deaf began to be taken seriously. At the request of certain professionals and some families, sign language interpreters were introduced in classrooms of compulsory secondary education. These early experiments encouraged various groups to undertake bilingual projects for very young children and at the moment six bilingual projects in compulsory elementary education are being developed.

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In fact the Projects for Bilingual Education (*Proyectos de Educación Bilingüe*, PEB) have taken shape in accordance with the conclusions of the World Conference on Special Education Needs: Access and Quality (June 7-10, 1994). This was held in Salamanca and organised by the Spanish government in cooperation with UNESCO. At this congress – represented by 92 governments and 25 international organisations – the Declaration of Salamanca was approved, in which the importance of sign language as a means of communication for deaf students is clearly set forth. 'It must be guaranteed that all the Deaf have access to education in the Sign Language of their country' [...] and 'for specific communication needs of the Deaf and the Deaf/Blind, it is advisable that teaching be carried out in special classes or in classes and special units in mainstream education'. (Art. 21)

After this meeting a Royal Decree on the ruling of special education of students with special needs, *Real Decreto de 28 de Abril de ordenación de la educación especial de los/las Alumnos/as con Necesidades Educativas Especiales* (BOE n.131: 2/6/95) was published. This states explicitly: The educational administration will foster the recognition and study of sign language and encourage its use in teaching centres where there are pupils with special educational needs associated with a severe or deep auditory incapacity. It must also promote the training of support staff and tutors of these pupils in the use of oral and visual systems of communication and in the command of the sign language.

Six months later, in December 1995, the cabinet approved the Royal Decree 2060/1995 which establishes the position of *Técnico Superior* [Advanced Specialist] in the interpretation of Sign Language and the corresponding minimum training. The said decree established official recognition of the interpreter of the Sign Language as a professional in his/her full right. In a number of Autonomous Communities the first courses for these interpreters have started.

At the same time changes in initial teacher training were introduced. So in 1991 credits in deaf education for all teachers, regardless of their specialisation (infant education; special education; hearing and language), were introduced. The problems still remain as there are still too few qualified deaf teachers despite the fact that their number is increasing under the instruction of deaf consultants.

Conclusions

From the 1970's, attention paid to deaf students' education in Spain has been characterised by a tendency towards inclusion in ordinary schools, in an effort to avoid segregation. The breakdown of school as a place of homogenised teaching, the importance of differentiated teaching, the consideration of students as active, learning subjects, and the recognition that schools need to respond to all students,

whatever their problems (social, physical, etc.) were all reasons, to support integration of deaf students in ordinary schools.

Nevertheless, the concept of educational integration does not have precise and immutable limits. It is a dynamic and changeable process that can vary from one Autonomous Community to another, and which can adapt itself to a variety of styles in its organisation and realisation. The characteristics of each student, the priorities of a given educational centre, parental involvement, and above all, the different ways of conceptualising deafness, by society and by teachers support this differentiation.

Because there are diverse ways of conceptualising deafness and the role of deaf people in society, it is important to explain the conceptual referential framework we draw on: from the hearing point of view, or from the perspective of the deaf. This needs to be considered alongside specific educational requirements for deaf students.

In this sense, educational professionals – mostly without hearing difficulties – have the responsibility to define what the educational needs of each deaf student are, and to determine the ways in which these requirements can be met. Such responsibility can be understood as a form of power, since they decide exactly 'what is needed and what is not' for the deaf students. This power should be used wisely. There should be a fostering of educational responses that not only please the non-deaf, their outlook and their values, but which also, and principally, satisfy deaf students and the deaf community as a whole.

Finally, it is important not to forget the fact that school teachers and administrators have an earlier and more intense role in the lives of deaf children than children in regular educational settings. While early intervention is a desirable goal, there are some dangers in transferring a major responsibility away from the home. One danger is that there may be a delay in parental feelings of responsibility and competence in relation to their own child. Another is that cognitive and educational tasks may be overemphasized for deaf children relative to social and emotional development.

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INTEGRATION VERSUS SEGREGATION –
THE CASE OF SLOVENIA

MOJCA PEČEK

Abstract – *In 1996 new school legislation outlining the education strategies in Slovenia for the future, including education of children with special needs, was passed in Parliament. Contrary to the former legislation that advocated segregation of children with special needs, the new one promotes integration in mainstream classes provided that this is in their best interest. This has raised many, not only practical, but also philosophical and political questions which I intend to discuss in my paper. To mention some of them: Who are the children with special educational needs? Which discourse can we use to discuss children with special needs? Who are the children with special needs that can be integrated in mainstream classes and what do we have to do to realise not only locational but also social and educational integration? How do we have to redesign teacher training courses to prepare class teachers and special teachers to work together successfully?*

Introduction

*I*n the developed world, the idea of integrating children with special needs in regular schools is becoming increasingly popular. Slovenia seems to follow the trend. While the laws and regulations in force not long ago saw special education as the only way of teaching this population of children, the key feature of the new Act on Placement of Children with Special Needs – finally passed in June 2000 after five years of parliamentary discussions – is integration. It does not anticipate integration of all children with special needs in regular schools, hence it does not imply abolishing schools with special needs. It rather regulates integration of those children who might progress better in regular schools, providing some conditions are met. When a decision is made as to where and how a pupil with special needs will get his/her education, the new Act assigns a significant role to his/her parents.

In order to get a better understanding of these changes, it is necessary to see them in a wider social context. First, there are particular current trends in the developed world. World organisations are encouraging their members to integrate children with special needs in regular schools whenever possible and to create suitable conditions to meet their needs. Their calls are based on the belief that

segregation of this population creates further stigmatisation which makes it more difficult for individuals to fit in society, and that it is necessary to ensure equal opportunities for children with special needs. An increasing number of countries are willing to adopt these views including integration of children with special needs in their legislation and official reports. This trend has no doubt played an important role in the new Slovenian legislation too.

The new legislation regulating this area, however, has to be viewed also in the larger context of the new legislation regulating the whole education system progressively introduced in Slovenia during the last decade. Independence of Slovenia in 1991[1] and its first democratic elections are often thought to be the main reasons for change in the education system. Contrary to that, I would like to stress the importance of the old legislation and the necessity to legitimise experiments which had taken place in primary schools all around Slovenia, especially at the end of the 80's and the beginning of the 90's, and the influence of contemporary concepts on teaching and learning processes as essential reasons for these changes.[2] Experiments in teaching children with special needs actually began much earlier. Statistical data shows that in 1976 the number of children with special programmes in primary schools had dropped by 50%. Integration was actually taking place long before the new legislation was introduced. It was, however, in a lot of cases, a silent integration, where classes were not adjusted for children with special needs, teachers were not trained to teach them, and was quite often called a 'locational' rather than social and educational integration. This kind of integration depended largely on the parents of children with special needs who wanted their children to attend a regular rather than special school close to their place of residence. It also depended on the dedication of the children requiring special attention as well as the experts in this field and the teachers (Novljan, 1997, p. 75, 77; Galeša, 1992; Krek, 1996, pp. 138-142).

The new school legislation ensures that the principles of democracy, autonomy and equal opportunity are abided by. These principles are the building blocks of the Chart on Human Rights and the notion of a legal state. With regards to teaching children with special needs, the new legislation underlines the principle of equal opportunity which takes into account individual differences, meaning that a child with a special need should get enough help to control his/her disability and/or overcome its consequences as much as possible. As we read in the White Paper on Education, in the Republic of Slovenia[3] 'specialized teaching techniques should be adopted for working with such children, and their integration into the common education system should be promoted. Special attention should be paid to fighting the stereotypes of 'normal' and 'deviant' in the school population and to the historical and social aspects of such categorization' (Krek, 1996, p. 41).

As the Act on Placement of Children with Special Needs has only been passed recently, we are currently at the stage of passing a number of regulations which will help define and clarify the Act and will offer teachers guidelines as to how to teach children with special needs. How this integration will shape up in practice is very hard to forecast. Integration needs to ensure suitable quality education for children with special needs in regular schools. Whether this will indeed be the case depends largely on the teacher. Legislation may require that children with special needs are educated in regular schools, but this does not automatically guarantee that social and educational integration will follow. The classroom is the place where a teacher makes very important decisions, in other words, his/her teaching can generate either integration or segregation. Integration is therefore a practical project for teachers and largely depends on their willingness to accept this task and their ability to execute it in a suitable way.

There are at least two factors that will determine success for integration: the first is the discourse used when dealing with integration in acts and legal documents; the second is the practice or, rather, the way in which the law is interpreted by teachers in the classroom. The aim of this paper is mainly to analyse the former. I will highlight the philosophical and political solutions that were used as the basis for the new legislation regarding teaching children with special needs in Slovenia. Even though promoting integration through legislation does not in itself guarantee that it will be realised in practice, the concept of special needs as used in acts and legal documents can influence teacher attitudes towards integration and pupils with special needs. It is thus my intention to analyse the strategy and theoretical background of the new Slovenian legislation regulating education of children with special needs.

Medical versus educational discourse

Discourse is crucial in shaping the strategy and theoretical background to reach certain goals. It defines how the goals can be reached and how a certain section of the world operates. It articulates this world in a particular way, identifying important problems and their features and indicating appropriate ways to solve them (Fulcher, 1989, p.8). Such a definition of discourse can be applied to the teaching of children with special needs. In practice, as well as in acts and legal documents, interpretation depends on what problems we identify as most important. This defines our ways of solving problems and determines whether these ways lead to integration or segregation, pupil independence or dependence.

In her analysis of disability policies, Gillian Fulcher talks about four types of discourse, namely: medical discourse, charity discourse, lay discourse and rights

discourse (Fulcher, 1989, pp. 26-31). She then adds educational discourse, a term she uses mainly in regards to teaching children with special needs. I would like to highlight here only the medical and educational types of discourse as the most visible ones in Slovenia.

The starting point for medical discourse is dealing with problems regarding the human body and the individual. It focuses on physiological changes and their consequences, using notions such as impairment, disability and sometimes handicap. Impairment is a term for anatomical loss or a loss of bodily function; disability is the measurable, functional loss resulting from an impairment – for example, poor ability of speech can be the consequence of a hearing impairment. Handicap is however the social consequence caused by environmental and social conditions which prevent a person achieving his/her maximum potential (Fulcher, 1989, p.22; Lewis, 1995, p.8).

The problem with the medical discourse, as pointed out by Fulcher, is that by linking impairment and disability it 'suggests through its correspondence theory of meaning, that disability is an observable or intrinsic, objective attribute or characteristic of a person, rather than a social construct' (Fulcher, 1989, p.27). Thus the medical discourse 'forgets' that we often talk about disability even though the impairment has not been found, is only assumed or not even that. The social context of a person with impairment turns him/her into a disabled person, and vice versa: an impairment per se does not necessarily imply the person in question is disabled. Furthermore, a person can be identified as disabled even though there is no impairment. A good illustration of such a situation is children with problems in social integration (displaying behavioural and personality problems) whose disability can often not be attributed to impairment but rather to their failing to reach the behaviour standards required by their social context. Disability in this context is a consequence of unhelpful and discouraging social interactions. The person could not learn certain social skills since he/she has never in his/her life been faced with the type of situation requiring them. Disability therefore is not only some measurable loss resulting from an impairment. Its cause is not always within the individual for it is a social category. Consequently, when analysing a person's disability it is necessary to take into account his/her social context.

If we take, in treating children with special needs, the medical discourse as our basis, we focus our attention on their disability. Disability becomes the basic criterion by which we differentiate children, and it is also offered as the main reason for a child's failure, demonstrating that medical discourse builds integration – where it does – on a basis of differentiation and stigma. It starts out from the position that some children have disabilities and others have not, it differentiates children according to one feature – disability. In this respect, the

school not only confirms what society regards as 'normal' and 'abnormal', it also gives the 'abnormal' new and wider dimensions using it as the scapegoat for all its failures. One of the problems arising from such an understanding of integration lies in the fact that the reasons for the child's failure in school are sought in the child's disabilities rather than in the conditions which generate these disabilities and which are further worsened by judgement based differentiation. This has been the experience in many countries. Children with special needs are often declared those that teachers find problematic in one way or another even though they do not seem to have any kind of impairment. Children who have a visual or a hearing impairment are not really a problem. In many countries there are more such children than ever before attending regular schools as legislation supports their integration. Problematic is the placement of children with various learning, behavioural and emotional problems. International data shows that these children are increasingly labelled as those with special needs so that teachers can justify their failure in the classroom (Allan *et al.*, 1998, p.24; Fulcher, 1989).

In this respect, Fulcher also points out that integration based on the medical discourse is only a new name for special education (Fulcher, 1989, pp.55-56). It is based on the belief that some children are different because they have a disability, therefore their education requires special methods, special goals and they should be taught by specially trained teachers. This means that children with special needs can be integrated in regular schools but the integration remains merely locational rather than social and educational. From this point of view, the medical discourse divides rather than unites children.

Integration according to the educational discourse is in comparison a fairly new idea. Its basic premise is that all children are first of all pupils and they all strive to acquire knowledge; teachers thus have to be very well trained to help all their pupils achieve this goal. The premise that all children are first of all pupils implies a different theoretical background and different analysis of the problem. At the centre of attention is not how to pin down the child's disability, but rather how to teach a pupil who has learning problems. Accordingly, teacher training does not primarily focus on various kinds of problems children might have, but rather on how to teach pupils who experience problems in school. This approach also changes the criterion that determines where and how a pupil is educated. The criterion is not the disability but the curriculum. At the centre is the child's development, his/her ability to learn, the type of knowledge essential for him/her. Once this is established it can then be decided how his/her goals will most likely be achieved and what kind of assistance he/she might need on the way. This approach is thus based on the assessment of how much help a pupil needs in order to compensate for his/her impairment and overcome his/her disability. The focus, in other words, is on educational problems and methods.

In Slovenia too we would like to replace the medical discourse which has been prevalent in the past with the educational discourse. Instead of the existing static pigeonholing of pupils with special needs, we are beginning to introduce progressive processes assisted by individualised education programmes graded from the most segregated to the most integrated.[4] It is less important whether an individual is visually or hearing impaired: what matters is to assess what kind of a programme he/she can follow, under what conditions, and how much help he/she needs with it. The question, in fact, is what is one able to learn and how. The school to which a child is sent is required to design an individualised programme for each subject, plan additional expert help, make adjustments in organisation, assessment, timetable, etc... The suitability of a programme has to be evaluated annually so that in the following year a pupil can join either a more integrated or a more segregated type of programme. At all levels of decision-making, planning, working, evaluating and progressing, the child's parents must be involved.

We are thus moving from a medical to an educational discourse, introducing the notion of 'ability' in place of 'disability' and placing pupils on an annual basis into programmes rather than categories of disabilities. All this certainly creates better conditions to encourage integration in the classroom. However, as I intend to demonstrate, there are many dangers lurking at the level of strategy and theory which can hinder integration. These range from the definition of pupils with special needs, to professional workers flexing their muscles in confrontation with parents, and too little attention paid to teacher training to help teachers cope with the situation.

Who are the pupils with special needs?

The acts and documents regulating special education in Slovenia in the past used the term 'children with mental and physical disorders'. These were further classified as mentally handicapped children, children with hearing and speech impairments, visually impaired children, children with other disabilities, children with behavioural and personality disorders and those with multiple handicaps. These definitions affected about 3% of the whole pupil population.

At the time of debate about the new legislation this classification was put under question. Some experts pointed out it was necessary to differentiate between a loss (blind, visually impaired, deaf, hearing impaired, mentally handicapped, etc.) and disability which has grown from the interaction of an impaired child with his/her dysfunctional environment. In other words, the child's loss should be interpreted as a social problem. As pointed out by Vigotski it thus depends on all of us whether the blind, deaf, and/or mentally handicapped child will be disabled or not. A blind

person will remain blind, and the deaf will remain deaf, but they do not need to be disabled because disability is a social notion attached to blindness, deafness and mental handicap. Blindness, deafness and mental handicap are not disabilities *per se*, they are only losses, weaknesses or obstacles. (Vigotski, quoted in Galeša, 1992, p.6). In Galeša's view it would be better to talk about this population of children as children with a 'loss' rather than a 'disorder' as was the case in the previous legislation (Galeša, 1992, p.5.)

An important role in deciding upon naming this population of pupils played the solutions used in Great Britain where they use the term 'children with special educational needs' or in short 'children with special needs'. This term, however, does not cover only children with an impairment but also those with no obvious impairment yet experiencing various learning, behavioural and emotional problems. In Britain it is estimated that about 20% of the whole school population will at some time of their school life need special care or help. However, for most of these children no statement is issued which would give them the right to a changed curriculum or exempt them from some parts of the study programme. In schools, there are 18% of children with special needs without such a statement. Only 2% has received a statement as it is issued only to children with disabilities of a more serious nature (Wedell, 1988, pp.103-104; Fulcher, 1989, pp. 158-185).

Our research shows that in Slovenia too, nearly half of the children who display problems at least once during their primary school years, will require special assistance. Some children need it every day but not every hour. Some experience problems in the first years in the early literacy, others have problems with mathematics, others yet with a foreign language. There is about one quarter of children who experience difficulties in learning to read and write, some due to their lower abilities and about 10% due to specific reading and writing disorders. About 15% of the children encounter problems in mathematics, 3% due to specific calculating disorders. Some disorders reappear and some do not, they are linked to a subject, topic or/and teacher (Žerdin, 1992, p.191).

From this data it is possible to conclude that about 20% of children in Slovenia do not have any disability but do need occasional help. For these children the former legislation provided additional professional help in the form of extra classes conducted either by the class teacher or other school counselling professionals (educator, psychologist, social worker, social educator, special educator). At that time the children with developmental disorders who were integrated in regular schools did not receive any proper care. If we wish to integrate these children into regular schools, additional professional help alone, as offered to children with learning, behavioural and emotional problems, does not always suffice.

The notion of children with special needs – as opposed to that of special disability categories – has gradually become established in Slovenia too. It is argued that this notion better fits this type of population than the term previously used, i.e., 'development disorders', it is less stigmatising, and it covers a much larger population. This term is now included in the legislation. According to the Act on Primary School passed in 1996, children with special needs may be one of the following: mentally handicapped, visually impaired, hearing impaired, speech impaired, physically impaired, children with a long term disease, children with behavioural and personality disorders who need adjusted educational programmes with additional professional assistance or special educational programmes, children with learning difficulties, and finally, gifted children (Article 11). It is estimated that about 20% of children have special needs (the gifted not included). Of those, 17% have learning difficulties and that leaves 3% of other types of disability. Pupils with learning difficulties have had additional assistance from teachers and other professionals ensured by the previous legislation. It is now necessary to make adjustments to the whole education process designing special methods, structures and programmes for the remaining children, in order to offer them what they need whether they are in regular or special schools.

A rather different definition of children with special needs from that found in the Act on Primary School can be seen in the Act on Placement of Children with Special Needs passed in June 2000. This Act better defines the ways children with special needs (apart from those with learning difficulties) must be treated. According to the new Act children who need modified educational programmes with additional professional help or special educational programmes are next to those named by the Act on Primary School as displaying 'impairment in specific learning fields'. It is anticipated that this will increase the population of children who should be placed in individualised programmes up to another 2 to 3 per cent.

Such a definition is the result of numerous professional debates which delayed the voting of this Act. Experts in special education could not agree upon whether to include children with serious specific disorders among those who needed adjusted study programmes or special programmes, or to let them have only additional assistance from teachers and professional workers without an individualized programme. The problems arising from the introduction of this new category are related to the definition of scope and contents of the 'impairment' typical for this population of children. What kind of diagnosis to apply in order to assess the impairment, and what is the difference between these children and others who are placed in other programmes according to the Act on Primary School?

What all this means for the future handling of children with special needs, is an open question. The fact is that the new legislation has increased the number of

pupils who need to have designed individualised programmes to about 5% to 6% from the previous 3%. Increased is also the number of children whom the new Act names as being in need of special assistance, or who, in other words, have special needs. In the previous Act there also used to be provision for these children's special or additional treatment but they were never specifically named. On top of that, teachers are becoming gradually more aware that there are many children who are special and who make teaching harder because of that. The fact that the new legislation is geared towards higher productivity and is controlled by external tests is therefore not negligible. It raises the question of how much additional assistance can be offered within a class and how much of that should come from the outside. It also raises the question of how to ensure that the outside assistance is not segregating and stigmatising. The more the assistance given in a special class (rather than a regular class with a special teacher), the lower the probability that locational integration will expand to social and educational integration as well.

Taking parental views into account

As I mentioned before, the new legislation gives parents of children with special needs more say over where and how their child is educated. For example, Article 49 in the Act on Primary School states that parents of a child with special needs have the right to enrol their child in a primary school in the suburb of their residence unless the school does not meet the conditions. In such a case the child is issued a legal Order of Placement assigning him/her to another primary school. The article is based on the awareness that success of a child with special needs depends to a large extent on his/her parents, hence it strives to include them in all stages of decision making, planning, working, and evaluation of the study programme and the child's progress.

This however opens up many questions for professional workers and teachers. For example, they would like to know what happens when parents decide to disregard evaluations by professionals and their recommendation. The Special Educators Guild of Slovenia states that experiences from the past indicate that the parents of a child with special needs who cannot accept the fact that their child is different can damage their child refusing to accept special assistance and treatment (Pripombe, 1998, p. 112). In their opinion, the Act should determine what is done when the Order of Placement is not respected. They say this would not only be a breach of regulations but could also cause damage to the child. They have requested an extra article to be included in the Act, which would make the Order of Placement final. However, the article was not included in the Act and an appeal

against an Order of Placement is now possible. The final decision is left to the Minister of Education who is advised on the matter by an expert committee.

A similar problem has arisen in respect to the possibility of the establishment of private institutions for children with special needs. The Act on Organisation and Financing of Education, the Act that covers the whole area of education, allows for a choice at all levels of education, meaning that children with special needs can be educated in private schools. Theoretically, this should ensure a wider choice for this population of children. Experts in special education however showed distrust of private institutions at the time of the passing of the Act on Placement of Children with Special Needs. They were of the opinion that these children could be abused by private institutions, being more vulnerable and in need of a better protection by the government than other children. They also pointed out the discrepancy between the Act which was to allow private schools for these children, and the Constitution. According to the Slovenian Constitution education of children with special needs is entirely financed from the National Budget whereas for private schools, according to the Act on Organization and Financing of Education, the Budget provides only 85% of their income. Experts in special education thus lobbied the proposed article which would allow for the establishment of private schools in this area, but their views did not get support in the parliament. The Act now allows private schools for children with special needs, and other documents will later determine the exact regulations for their founding and operation.

Both examples illustrate the attempts of the powerful and power-hungry professionals to impose their views on various issues in the education of children with special needs. The professionals would like to play the role of judge who knows what is best for a child (even though such knowledge is never neutral) and what is most suitable for the child's needs (even though it is them who determine what their needs are). They are in fact reviving the arguments of the medical discourse by hanging onto dependency and assistance in the place of confidence, independence, ambition – the feelings identified as highly important by many movements and initiatives of the disabled and their parents/representatives. Disabled people themselves would like to make the world aware of the fact that their problem lies not so much in their impairment or disability, but rather in their dependency on various professionals, obstacles in the environment, restrictions in life, and in not being given the opportunity for an independent living. They argue that their life cannot improve by getting even more help from professionals. Instead they demand conditions that will generate an environment which will let them compensate for their impairment and will support their integration. Professionals cannot make decisions on where and how a child with special needs will be educated on their own. It is necessary to ensure cooperation from the child

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and his/her parents as well. They ought to be offered choice and variation, and it is finally up to a child and his/her parents to decide what type of education suits them best. This is the only way for dealing with children with special needs as free and responsible beings who have the same opportunities to make their own decisions, as anyone else, and take full responsibility for them.[5]

Children's and teachers' attitudes towards integration

As mentioned before, the number of pupils in special schools has dropped since 1976 by more than 50%. About 2.5% of children aged between 7 and 15 years are now being educated in special institutions and 1.5% occasionally receive speech therapy in outpatient clinics, consulting centres and mobile units (Krek, 1996, p.139). At the moment, this amounts to about 3-5% of all children[6] (Pripombe, 1998, p.111). Let us have a closer look at these numbers.

In the academic year 1996/97, there were 99 children of primary age recorded as visually impaired: 49 (49.49%) of these children attended regular school and the rest attended the Institution for Visually Impaired Youth. The number of children in regular schools had been growing in the last decade but then it stopped because, according to Novljan (1997, p.76) 'it is very hard to integrate a child with no vision at all, or a visually impaired child who is also disabled intellectually or in some other way'. In Slovenia, we have not yet had a case of a child with no vision at all integrated in regular school (Gerbec & Florjančič, 1997, p.278).

In 1996/97 there were also 319 children recorded as hearing impaired in the primary school. 138 (43.27%) children attended regular school and the others attended segregated educational institutions (Novljan, 1997, p. 77).

Most pupils with mild mental disorders attend special primary schools and only a small number is integrated in regular primary schools. According to data from the Statistics Office of the Republic of Slovenia, there were 55 special primary schools in 1993/94 with 3450 pupils in 400 classes (about 1.4% of the total Slovenian school children). There were 579 boarding children and 158 lived either with their family/relatives or with a foster family (ibid.). In 1999/00 there are only 32 special schools left, educating 2019 children in 288 classes (Število, 1999). Falling numbers are due to the decrease in child births but also to other alternatives available. There are more special educators employed by regular primary schools and they provide assistance inside or outside the classroom and advise teachers and parents how to help the child. There are also some cases of silent integration where a child is left without any extra help (Novljan, 1997, p.77). Children who are moderately or severely mentally handicapped are educated in special educational institutions.

Integration of children with physical handicaps and children with long-term diseases in regular schools depends mainly on the child's mobility, his/her health, school, and family situation. In recent years the number of children in the two special schools for physically handicapped children and children with long-term diseases is falling down considerably. In special schools there are mostly children with serious mobility problems (Novljan, 1997, p.79). In 1999/00, there were 104 children with long-term diseases in 18 classes (Število, 1999).

There are eight institutions for children with behavioural and personality disorders and two boarding homes with between 25 to 56 children living there. Some of these children are included in activity groups in those institutions but otherwise attend regular schools. Educational programmes in the institutions are also attended by day students/pupils (Število, 1999).

There are many disputes and disagreements among professionals regarding the organisation of programmes for children with special needs, and their eligibility for regular schools. Nevertheless, integration is definitely under way. That brings us to the next question, i.e., how teachers feel about integration as it is clear their attitude affects the children themselves as well as the way their classmates view them. Let me here refer to a few surveys which have set out to research this question.

First we will take a look at a survey by Novljan, Jelenc & Jerman (1998), which included 763 randomly chosen teenagers from regular primary schools. They were all aged between 12 and 15. The researchers wanted to know how they felt about their peers with learning difficulties. The survey showed that students with learning difficulties were not undesirable among their non-handicapped peers, as about half of them did not mind their company. More than one third of teenagers believed that teachers were understanding enough with their classmates with learning difficulties and were willing to help them. Almost half of the teenagers surveyed were willing to give up their spare time to help these classmates. Almost half of those surveyed approved of their being educated together.

Another survey (Schmidt, 1997) looked at the views about the integration of children with learning difficulties in regular schools held by teachers in regular primary schools and special educators in special schools. The differences in views held by teachers and special educators show that special educators harbour much less positive views on integration, namely in regards to its organization, acquired knowledge in regular primary schools, and especially in regards to the emotional and social integration. More than half of the special educators surveyed believed that children with learning difficulties were better off in special schools, whereas 77.5% of teachers in regular schools favoured integrating methods of work and held positive views regarding the social effects of integration. Teachers, however, did not seem to have clear views about individualised forms of work and the

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amount of knowledge children with learning difficulties should acquire in a regular school.

Evaluation of another project, namely integration of 3 hearing impaired children in a regular primary school after their first year there, showed some interesting results too (Schmidt & Čagran 1998). The analysis showed that children with no hearing problems did not acquire less knowledge because they had hearing impaired peers included in their classes. On the contrary, their final test results in Slovenian language and mathematics were better than those achieved by the control group. This is certainly a favourable outcome for the chosen model of integration. The results achieved by the hearing impaired children too led to a conclusion that all three of them benefited from the integration in an educational sense, whereas social integration seemed to be less successful as it worked only for one child.

Another survey (Peršolja, 1997) looked at the social status of hearing impaired integrated children. The conclusion was that there were no significant differences in the social status of hearing impaired children (20 children aged 8 to 14) and other children (20 children). However, it would not be appropriate to generalise these conclusions as the survey included only a small number of children.

A survey by Kuhar (1996) of 30 classes integrating hearing impaired children aged 7 to 15 reached the conclusion that only a 17% of the hearing impaired children held very high social status (they were class stars) whereas the majority of them (43%) were not liked or felt lonely. On the other hand, Platiše (1998) in her survey concludes that hearing impaired children progress better in integrated rather than segregated classes having better chances to acquire higher education at a later stage

The last survey I would like to mention (Fabrizio-Filipič, 1997) included 461 teenagers aged 14-16. Its aim was to establish how healthy classmates saw their peers with special needs. It transpired that they were quite happy to make friends with them. Most of them said they would prefer to make friends with a hearing impaired classmate (64.1%) but they could also be friends with a visually impaired, physically handicapped and/or mentally handicapped peer. 90.8% replied they would protect their classmate with special needs if somebody mistreated him/her. They also thought their peers with special needs could join all their after class activities. As to their success in school, most teenagers (67.7%) thought their physically handicapped peers could achieve the same results as them. They believed the same about their hearing impaired (61.1%) and visually impaired peers (54.9%). However, not so many believed that a mentally handicapped classmate could be as successful as themselves. 46.3% of those surveyed answered this question with 'I don't know'. 50.8% also said they did not know whether pupils with special needs should attend regular primary school or not.

As we can see, feelings about pupils with special needs are not as negative as expected by professionals. Most of the surveys above are taken from the latest issues of the *Slovenian Special Educators Guild Review*, the leading Slovenian journal in this area, on the assumption that they publish only the most up-to-date research. It seems that the hearing impaired children and the children with learning difficulties are currently most interesting in respect to how other children and their teachers see them. However, these surveys do not provide a realistic picture of how children with special needs are received in regular schools. They are not representative as they did not include the total population of children with special needs. It is also questionable how reliable these answers really are, namely, to what extent children agree with these answers on principle and whether they would really act upon them in a real life situation. Nevertheless, the surveys at least show that other children and teachers are willing to accept children with special needs in their midst. They also show some doubt on the part of special educators as to whether such children can be successfully taught in regular schools, due to the attention they require because of their educational needs. For a clearer picture of the status of children with special needs in regular schools it would be necessary to get more detailed answers about teacher attitudes as well as answers from the children with special needs themselves about their feelings in integrated classes.

Teacher training

The surveys I mentioned earlier show a fairly positive picture of attitudes towards integrated children with special needs. They also point out however that teachers are not well enough prepared to work with these children. Teachers seem to lack knowledge about children's needs, they find it hard to adjust, they adjust in an inappropriate way, or they offer too much assistance. Teachers who teach integrated classes often feel they have an unfairly high workload. This means they do not believe that teaching children with special needs is their problem. One reason for this attitude can be found in their training system.

There is a dual system of teacher training in Slovenia. Training for teachers who teach children with special needs is separate from training for teachers of other children. There are undergraduate degrees available in both cases. According to the old legislation, special educators were allowed to teach children with special needs only in special schools. In regular schools they could only play a counselling role: they could advise teachers or help children after school. According to the new legislation, however, special educators can act as

supplementary teachers by helping classroom teachers teach children with special needs either during class or separately. This change, however, opens the question of mainstream and special teachers' training.

At the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana, one of the core courses in the undergraduate programme for class teachers[7] is called 'Pedagogy of Children with Development Disorders'. It is a 60-hour course. Students can also study teaching children with special needs as an option. Thus, they do acquire some knowledge about the subject. It is questionable, however, whether this suffices to help them integrate children efficiently. It is also debatable whether the knowledge acquired is suitable for the needs of integration. In order to be effective, such courses should concentrate on issues of education, organisation, mixed ability teaching methods, rather than recognising various disorders. It is my belief that the educational goals should be the same for all children while the help they receive to reach these goals may vary. In order to achieve these goals, teachers need to be able to organise individual and group work and should be flexible in liaising with other professionals.

As I said before, special educators can now teach in regular Slovenian schools but that raises questions about their training. Special teacher studies in Slovenia are not a postgraduate course one takes after teaching for a few years in a regular classroom, as the case is in many other countries (Peček, 1998). In Slovenia, this is an undergraduate programme where knowledge about children with special needs and their education in special schools is acquired. It is thus problematic how a special teacher with no knowledge of teaching in regular school and no training for this job can help a classroom teacher integrate children with special needs. His/ her credibility can become questionable and an obstacle to the successful cooperation between him/her and the classroom teacher. It also seems hypocritical to lobby for abolishing children's categorisation on one side and then organise teacher training based on this very categorisation.[8]

It is therefore necessary to rethink current teacher training for mainstream and special teachers in order to create suitable conditions to accommodate integration. As I mentioned at the beginning, integration is a practical project largely depending on teachers and their willingness to undertake this task, as well as their ability to handle it in a suitable way. It no doubt begins with a suitable teacher training.

Conclusion

I will conclude with a question I could have asked at the beginning: what is, in fact, integration? It transpires from my account so far that there are a few applications of this term in Slovenia. At one end there is the narrow interpretation

which covers integration of pupils with special needs in the regular school underlining the location of the pupil's education. At the other end there is the broader sense which presumes a different quality of education for children with special needs. In practice this usually means a mixture of the special/different and what is used as a standard, defining integration as a process in which segregation is avoided while every effort is made to ensure children with special needs are treated as equals to the others. However, integration can also be defined in terms of goals and means to achieve this aim. It implies integration of children with special needs into their broader social environment at all levels, and is also called 'social integration'. When it is seen as the means to achieve this goal it entails common education – hence also called 'educational integration' – or rather, it entails setting the grounds for a cooperation between people with and without special needs (Novljan, 1992, p.196).

Evidently, there are many definitions of integration, and they all have their limitations, a fact often pointed out by people with special needs themselves (see Note 5). While discussing the educational and/or social integration the central issue remains the process of adaptation. Yet an integration based on respect for human rights and for personal identity cannot anticipate adaptation of persons with special needs to some dominant culture and dominant system of values. It must rather indicate support for people with special needs. It should moreover facilitate a group of such people to grow with the community and create a new whole.

Integration, thus, cannot equal assimilation, in other words, adaptation of a minority (persons with special needs) to the majority (everyone else) rule. It should rather be seen as a process requiring changes in both groups. The process of living in and with the community is the key element. Yet, a level of personal identity needs to be preserved. For this reason some authors prefer to talk about 'inclusion' rather than 'integration (Šučur, 1997), while others favour 'emancipation' (Rutar, 1997). Yet others are providing empirical evidence to show that persons with special needs are not, and should not be treated as helpless objects influenced by other people, and should be accepted as responsible and equal partners capable of planning their own life and contributing to the community (Kobolt, 1999). These are the questions the Slovenian special educators will have to address in the future. Let people with special needs make their own decisions and encourage them to lead their own life responsibly and independently.

Notes

1. Slovenia used to be part of Austria and later Austro-Hungary until the end of World War I. After World War I it became part of Yugoslavia, and since 1991 it has been an independent country.
2. The most evident change in primary school (i.e., compulsory education) is extending it from eight to nine years. Children will start school at the age of six (now seven). Primary school will consist of three three-year periods. Contrary to the current situation which does not allow for selection and optional subjects, the new legislation establishes a selective primary school: in the last three-year period, students will be ranked at three levels in the three core subjects, Slovenian, mathematics and a foreign language. In this last three-year period they will also have the option of choosing three subjects from the pool of humanities and science subjects. Other changes concern integration of children with special needs, assessment, external examinations and team-teaching. A foreign language will be introduced a year earlier, i.e., at the age of nine (Grade 4). Primary class teachers will teach in the first and partly second period, and primary subject teachers will teach in the third and partly second period. In Grade 1, a preschool teacher or second primary class teacher will also be present in the classroom for half of the time, which means that the two teachers should be able to work together as a team. This will also be the case if children with special needs are integrated in the class. In such a case, a special teacher will work together with the primary teacher. In the classes with integrated pupils with special needs the number of children in the class will decrease. These changes will be introduced gradually. In September 1999, 42 primary schools in Slovenia (out of 820) started introducing the new programme in Grade 1 and Grade 7 of the new nine-year primary school. With each new academic year the number of schools implementing the new programme will increase, until 2003/2004, when the new programme will be finally introduced into all Slovenian primary schools.
3. The *White Paper on Education* in the Republic of Slovenia is the theoretical basis for the new legislation in this area. It was prepared in 1995 after lengthy discussions about the vision of future education in Slovenia and comparative analyses of education systems in selected European countries (English translation in 1996). In 1996, a number of acts regulating the education system in Slovenia were passed, some of them, as already mentioned, not before June 2000. New curriculum programmes have been approved too.
4. – prisons, asylums (high disorder level and severed links with the environment);
    – special establishments (children are unable to go home and are only visited by parents);
    – hospitals and health resorts (children with chronic diseases that cannot go home);
    – homes for the handicapped, special educational establishment (children go home week-ends only);
    – special schools;
    – special classes in regular primary schools;
    – regular classes with periodic special treatment in accordance with specified topics and subjects (home-class teacher, special educator, psychologist, social worker, social pedagogue);
    – regular classes with additional assistance within and outside the class (special educator, psychologist, social worker, social pedagogue);
    – regular classes with additional assistance outside the class (special educator, psychologist, social worker, social pedagogue);
    – regular classes with higher degree of additional assistance (home class teacher and special educator);
    – regular classes with normal additional assistance (home-class teacher);
    – regular classes without any assistance. (Krek, 1996, p.140)
5. The most radical advocates of this type of idea are handicapped people organised in YHD (Association for Theory and Culture of Handicap). Among other activities, they publish expert articles in their magazine AWOL (Paper for Social Studies) and organise public protests.

According to them, it is the handicapped themselves who should train people to help them for they are the ones to know best what it is they need. They oppose integration because they believe that as long as handicapped people are seen as aliens they cannot be integrated. They will only be integrated when they cease being aliens. They also state that integration is not possible without a loss of freedom in decision-making and freedom to recognise non-existence of the society. They finally believe in emancipation (Rutar, 1997, pp.32-45).

6. Slovenia covers an area of 20.273 km^2 and has about 2 million inhabitants. In 1998/99, primary school was attended by 193,914 pupils, 3,361 of them in classes with adjusted programme. 98% of primary school graduates continued their studies in high school and 84% of high school graduates continued their studies at the tertiary level (Plevnik & Žižmond, 1999, p. 3, 10).

7. I will refer only to class teachers, i.e., teachers who teach all subjects in the first four years of primary school. Subject teachers who are trained to teach only specific subjects spend much fewer hours studying this topic. There is no specific course in their undergraduate programme that would prepare them to teach pupils with special needs. Some relevant topics are discussed in other psychology and pedagogy courses. The information they get, however, is very limited as these courses occupy very few hours in their programme. Subject teachers study mainly their own subject and spend less time building up their teaching skills.

8. Similar problems also exist in Spain, for example (see Latas, 1995; Balbas, 1995).

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION IN MALTA

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Abstract – *This paper aims at presenting an account of recent developments in inclusive education policy, discourse and practice in Malta. The inclusion initiative is placed within the opposite context of competitive and streaming practices prevalent in the Maltese education system. A brief account is given of how inclusive policy and practice have been influenced by the following: United Nations policies; local political developments; the setting up and activities of parent associations and a National Commission for Persons with Disability; and the action for persons with developmental disabilities of an effective Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). The recent development of a National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) with a wide consensus intended to ensure a quality education for all is seen as a very hopeful context for the achievement of inclusive education in Malta. A critical account of current perceptions, practices, concerns and aspirations for inclusive education in Malta is provided through a review of the very recent report of the Working Group on Inclusive Education set up as part of the strategy for the implementation of the NMC over the next five years.*

Introduction

'Every child has a fundamental right to education.

Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.

Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all...' (UNESCO, 1994, pp.viii-ix)

$\mathcal{T}$he above inclusive education principles have been adopted by the Maltese community as in many other countries, but each country is at a different stage in their implementation (OECD, 1999). Within the past decade in Malta, there have been important developments towards inclusive education for students with disability, both at the discourse and practical levels. This paper gives an account of this process.

Terminology in the area of disability and education has been constantly changing, and it is useful to start off by defining briefly the main terms and concepts used in this paper. First of all, three levels of inclusive educational arrangements are distinguished, namely special education, mainstreaming (integration), and inclusion.

(a) The setting up of *special education facilities* has sometimes been seen as a retrograde step of segregation of children with disability from mainstream to special schools for the benefit of non-disabled students (Barton & Tomlinson, 1981). In the Maltese context, however, it is seen as a first step towards the recognition of the right and potential of every child, whatever his or her disability, to benefit from some form of educational provision.

(b)   With the increase in special school provision, the segregation these imposed on students with disability became the new focus of educators. Since the 1970's, Malta shared the international concern about the *integration* of children with disability into mainstream schools. Though the term 'integration' is still sometimes used interchangeably with 'inclusion', it has been found useful in Malta as in the United States of America to apply it more specifically to the attempt to make students with disability fit into regular schools. Such a focus is better captured by the term *mainstreaming,* coined in the United States of America, and used in this paper to refer to the movement towards having more and more students with disability placed in mainstream rather than special schools (Steinback & Steinback, 1990). This process is termed integration in citations from the 1970's and 1980's.

(c)   Current progressive thinking in the education of children with disability sees mainstreaming as a first step that needs to be followed by *inclusive education.* Inclusion, a term more widely used since the 1990's, does not focus on fitting students to regular schools but rather fitting regular schools to the needs of all students. Inclusion is about 'how to develop regular school and classroom communities that fit, nurture, and support the educational and social needs of every student in attendance' by making the regular school 'a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his or her peers and other members of the school community' (Steinback & Steinback, 1990, pp.3-4).

A second issue of terminology in the field relevant to this paper is the way one refers to those students who require additional individual educational provisions to ensure their progress. The main two current terms are *students with disability* or *students with Special Educational Needs* (SEN). Up to a decade ago in Malta, it was common to refer to persons with disability as 'the handicapped'. However,

this is now regarded as denigrating the dignity of persons with disability who are first of all persons like everybody else with similar needs and human rights. This fact is better reflected in the phrase *persons with disability*: thus, in Malta, the 'National Commission for the *Handicapped,*' set up in 1987, changed its title to 'National Commission for *Persons with Disability*' in 1992. The term disability has been more widely used in the United States of America. Warnock (1978) in the United Kingdom coined another widely used term, children with *Special Educational Needs*. This term was intended to replace the medical focus on the deficits within students to the need for special provisions that schools had to make to ensure their progress (OECD, 2000). However, the term has been criticised as still associated with segregation (Barton & Tomlinson, 1981). This objection has been recently raised in Malta, also by the National Commission for Persons with Disability, because of its emphasis on 'special'. However, a recent committee found it convenient to still use the term but accompanied by a warning about its possible negative implications:

> The working group recognises that the term 'Special' (in Special Educational Needs) may be construed as patronising, given that each child has his or her own unique needs, and therefore 'special' should not be equated with the individual with disability. 'Special' should be taken as referring to those individual educational needs which the school has to provide for.' (NMC – G02)

The concept of SEN raises another issue: it is applied not only to children with disabilities but also to those who are disadvantaged in their schooling through learning difficulties 'arising from the interaction of a variety of child and subculture characteristics such as temperament, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, ability and disability' (NMC - G02, 2000, para. 1). These have been estimated to amount to around 20% of the whole school population (OECD, 1999). Inclusion is concerned with the acceptance and support for the learning of these children as well. In this paper, however, the terms SEN and disability are used interchangeably for those children who have significant learning difficulties arising from some form of within child impairment and which require extra provisions to enable the student's learning.

This paper focuses on current Maltese perceptions and practice of inclusive education through a critical review of the recent report of the Working Group on Inclusive Education (NMC – G02, 2000) drawn up within the widely debated development of a *National Minimum Curriculum (NMC)* (Ministry of Education, 1999) for a quality education for all Maltese students.

The historical context

Educational developments

Like most Mediterranean countries, Malta has a long cultural history with several prehistoric remains that go back to at least 5000BC. The University of Malta is 400 years old, dating back to the time when the islands were in the hands of the European Military Order of the Knights Hospitallers of St John. However, the opening of educational opportunities for all has been a relatively recent development, appearing here much later than in Britain. Malta was a British colony from 1800 to 1964, retaining the United Kingdom monarchy as head of state till 1974 when it became a republic. Compulsory education for all children was legally introduced in 1946 and fully implemented by the early 1950s. Secondary education for all was introduced in 1970. The compulsory school leaving age was raised from 14 to 16 in 1974. Kindergarten centres for 4-year-olds were opened in 1975, and extended to 3-year-olds in 1987 so that today the vast majority of 3- and 4-year-olds (over 95%) attend school regularly. The first Education Act was drawn up in 1974, and revised in 1988 when the right of every child to educational provision was established. Public special education provision started in 1956 (Burlò, undated) and today all children with special needs have a right to attend school and are served by some level of educational provision (Zammit Mangion, 1992).

The education system for the 80,000 student population (approximately) is generally structured like that of the United Kingdom. Children move from kindergarten (3-4 years), to primary (5 to 10 years), to secondary (11-15 years), to sixth form or post-secondary vocational courses (16-17 years), and finally to the only University of Malta. Indeed, the Maltese also shared with the United Kingdom, until 1993, the complete determination of its school certification system at 16 and 18 years through British General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination boards for 'Ordinary' and 'Advanced' level certificates.

Malta's educational system has however two important characteristics that contrast with those of the United Kingdom, and arise mostly out of the smallness of the Maltese isles. First of all, Malta has only one central Education Division that determines the funding, curriculum and employment of school personnel in all state schools: thus policy and practice decisions affect all state schools, rather than only any particular region. Secondly, British administrators and educators make reference generally to their own national policy and legislation regarding standards for educational development. It is however more usual for the Maltese to refer to the standards developed in other countries, i.e. during the colonial period to British standards, and since becoming a republic to standards set up by the United Nations, or more recently to European Union criteria.

Streaming mentality

Maltese educators had tried to emulate United Kingdom developments towards comprehensive secondary education in the 1970's when national examinations, apart from the GCEs at the end of Secondary schooling, were abolished. However, it is widely understood that preparations for this transition had been inadequate and were partly responsible for an accelerated expansion of Church and private schools, which were not comprehensive. Consequently, by 1981, the comprehensive system had been aborted and there was a reversion to a rigid streaming system within schools. Ability was determined on the basis of national examinations from Year 2 primary (6-year olds). There was an 11+ entrance examination into grammar schools (called Junior Lyceums) at the end of primary school. Though streaming and national examinations have been gradually postponed to Year 4 primary, we now have streaming both within schools and across schools (see Sultana, 1992). There are about two-thirds of students in state schools organised as area schools, while the rest of the students from all over the islands attend several non-state schools, mostly Church schools funded by Government and a few private fee-paying schools. In the State schools, children are placed into rigidly streamed classes on the basis of their total score in written examinations in 5 subjects – Maltese, English, Mathematics, Social Studies and Religion – at the end of Year 4 (8 years of age). A similar examination at the end of Year 6 primary determines the streaming of all children into Junior Lyceums, Secondary schools, and 'Other' Secondary schools for the lowest achievers, each stream taking around 45%, 45% and 10% respectively. There is moreover a rigid syllabus for all students at each year-level for each subject, entrenched through the content of national examinations, and leading to the prevalence of whole-class teaching methods. Surveys of teachers and parents show that the majority are in favour of this streaming system. Current economic thinking trends in Malta highlight the importance of competition, and this competitive situation is often cited by those in favour of competition in the schools as a way of preparing students for real adult life.

Within this mentality, however, the rival discourse of the rights of each child for a quality education, and especially the right of access to education in regular schools for students with disability, has now taken root. It was fuelled by developments in Europe as well as local political and educational enterprise.

The development of an inclusive policy for persons with disability

I have traced the development of special education in Malta in another context (Bartolo, 2001). Suffice it here to outline some of the most important landmarks.

The first major policy document in this direction was developed within the Health Service. Malta was one of the first members of the WHO Regional Office for Europe to embark on the development of a 'National Health for All Policy' (Asvall, 1986). The idea that persons with disability should be 'integrated' in regular settings was clearly stated in the 'Health Services Development Plan' for 1986-1990, developed by a Labour administration:

> 'The medical, educational, rehabilitative and social services aim at assisting the handicapped to remain integrated with his/her peer group and as such achieve full participation in the vocational and social life of the community. Even when some form of special educational treatment is given, this ought to be made available in a normal school setting, and when a handicapped person needs residential services, these should as far as possible be provided in small hostels rather than large institutions and in the community where he or she spends most of his/her life.' (p.103)

Meanwhile, voluntary associations for the various sections of disabled persons started putting on public pressure. While a 'Rehabilitation Fund for the Physically Handicapped' had been set up in 1946, two new associations set up in the 1970's and 1980's by parents of children with disability began to exert their political clout. These were the 'Commission for the Sick and Handicapped' set up in 1947, and the 'Society for the Blind' set up in 1958. The 'National Association of the Young Deaf', set up in 1972, was complimented in the 1980's by the self-help group of 'Parents of persons with hearing impairment,' while a 'Parents' Society for Handicapped Children' was formed among parents of children with physical disabilities in 1976. The early 1980's saw the setting up of the 'Malta Down's Children Association,' the 'Muscular Dystrophy Association,' and the 'Dyslexia Association'. Some of these associations were further grouped into the 'Federation of Organisations for the Disabled' in 1973. Some members of these associations were particularly active, especially parents of affected children.

A high-handed Socialist government in the early 1980's led to a highlighting of human rights as one of the slogans of the Nationalist opposition party: this created an opportunity for the societies for persons with disability. They put forward their aspirations during 'dialogue meetings' with the opposition party and were able to have their wishes explicitly included in the Nationalist Party's election manifesto of 1987. Interestingly, however, no reference was made to disability under the education section. Instead, the section dedicated to provisions for the 'handicapped' was included under Health and Social Policy with the title, 'The handicapped will be one hundred per cent citizens', and the following principles:

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Handicapped will be applied, especially to:

- The right to live as normal a life as possible
- The right to participate as much as possible in social life
- The right to be protected against all form of abuse. (NPIO, 1987, para. 6.6)

Consequently, a *National Commission for the Handicapped* was set up in 1987 with representatives from Welfare, Social Security, Labour, Education, Health and Homes and representatives from Non-Governmental Organisations. This commission was very active and also very effective in getting wide political support, holding national seminars and other activities that raised awareness of disability issues. The first Administrative Report (1987-1992) of the Commission listed briefly the areas it had started to address under the following subheadings:

- a national register for persons with disabilities;
- the participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making;
- the prevention of impairment, disability and handicap;
- rehabilitation services;
- equal opportunities - preparation of an equal opportunities act, ensuring physical accessibility, social security and financial income arrangements, education and training, employment, recreation-culture-religion-sports, information and community education, and staff training (KNPD, 1992).

In 1993, the Commission produced the important policy document, *Special Education in Malta: National Policy* (Bezzina, 1993), endorsed by the departments of Education, Health and Social Policy. This was built around, and included citations from, the *World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons* (UN, 1983). Its inclusive principles are reflected in the following articles:

- Children without a disability have a right for an opportunity to be educated with children with disabilities.
- Every child with a disability shall have the right for education in the least restrictive environment which can be defined as follows: 'that to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

– The education authorities have to provide a whole range of services to meet the range of special needs in our community... As a first measure, a comprehensive and graduated plan should be drawn up to start educating children who are at present attending special schools. (Bezzina, 1993, paras. C.2, 3 & 5)

The Commission also influenced the report of the ministerial Consultative Committee on Education (Wain *et al.*, 1995) which embraced the concept of teaching for diversity as well as the education of all students in regular schools:

'It is the responsibility of the school to acknowledge, understand and respond to the different learning needs of individuals and groups, and to cater for them effectively in order to provide what is the entitlement of all: a quality education.' (p.15)

'Like the Commission we do not accept any form of schooling where the learner with disabilities is segregated for a significant portion of learning time from non-disabled children.' (p.51)

Development of inclusive practice

While this development of inclusive policy created an important framework, action towards inclusive education came from an NGO for persons with developmental disability, namely the Eden Foundation, which was set up in 1992 (Bartolo, 2000). Eden was founded by the parent of a daughter with Down syndrome, Dr Josie Muscat, who was also a medical doctor, an entrepreneur and ex-politician and therefore had the skills to ensure fund-raising and political support. Eden adopted a two-pronged belief and action:

1. That each child had potential for growth as a full member of society:

'Eden will work to help each individual - from very early childhood to young adulthood - to realise a sense of pride and accomplishment in his/her strengths. ... so that they can hold jobs, live independently and enjoy recreational activities in their communities' (First Eden Foundation brochure, 1993).

2. That society should accept diversity and be organised in such a way as to welcome and include every child and adult, whatever his or her condition, within its regular activities:

'The Eden Foundation ... aims at preparing not only teachers, but also classmates and whole schools to understand and accept the

participation and integration of children with special educational needs' (First Eden Foundation brochure, 1993).

Both goals were pursued from the start of Eden services in 1993. Firstly, the Eden Foundation immediately started offering transdisciplinary early intervention services for the development of each child's potential (70 children in 1993 and now amounting to around 400); and within the same year started placing young people with mental disability into regular jobs (6 by 1993 and now amounting to 65). Secondly, Eden immediately also involved and trained families in supporting their children's learning (Bartolo, 1994), called for and initiated the training of personnel for inclusive education in association with the University of Malta. It started a public campaign for the appreciation of each child's right to a quality education and also the right to be in regular schooling and community settings. Eden's activities, together with the policy-making National Commission for Persons with Disability, led to a call for the closure of special schools in Malta, which were then regarded as serving only to segregate children from regular schooling without offering specialised training.

The Eden Foundation, moreover, linked its services to the University of Malta (two psychologists who were Eden Consultants and lecturers at the university - Paul Bartolo and Elena Tanti Burlò - were coopted on the Eden Board of Trustees from 1993 to 1996). This led to the setting up of training programmes for personnel to support the inclusion of children with disability in regular schooling. A 'Programme for Inclusive Education' was set up within the Department of Psychology of the Faculty of Education, leading to the adoption of an inclusive policy by the Faculty in 1998.

The main impact of the above policy and practice initiatives is clearly shown in two achievements. First of all a landmark Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act was passed by Parliament in January 2000, whose main impact on Education has been to launch an initiative to make all schools at least physically accessible to all children. It has also led to the setting up of a legal body within the National Commission Persons with Disability to study any issue of discrimination on the basis of disability that may occur in any service, including education.

Secondly, the proportion of children identified as having special educational needs attending mainstream schools increased from 33% in 1992 (Bezzina, 1993) to 69% in 2000 (NMC - G02, 2000 - see Table 1). Note also that the development has not been restricted to state schools: 20% of all students identified as having SEN in mainstream attend church schools. There are also a number of other students with SEN in private schools. This has been achieved within the current streaming system through the employment of 488 special classroom assistants (an 11 times increase from the 40 of 1992 - Bezzina, 1993; NMC - G02, 2000; see

Table 2). There is thus now a student-with-SEN/support-staff ratio of 1.2:1 in the mainstream, which is significantly larger than the 2:1 in special schools (see Table 2).

TABLE 1: Proportion of students with identified SEN in regular and special schools (derived from NMC - G02, 2000, para. 2.1)

	Type of placement	Number in each category *f*	Proportion in mainstream vs special schools %	Proportion in mainstream vs Church schools %
Mainstreamed	In State regular Schools	490	69	80
	In Church regular Schools	124		20
Segregated	In Special Schools*	275	31	
Totals		889	100	

* There are currently seven special schools in Malta: two schools for children with moderate learning difficulties, one school for children with severe learning difficulties, one for children with physical and multiple disabilities, one for emotional and behavioural difficulties, one for children with hearing impairment, and one for children with visual impairment.

Despite these achievements, there is a lot of concern among educators that what has been achieved is largely 'mainstreaming' - the placement of children with SEN in regular schooling -rather than 'inclusion' which implies a change in the school curriculum, organisation and ethos to ensure all children belong to the school and classroom. At the same time Government is concerned about the cost of mainstreaming. These issues, however, are being addressed within an important development in Maltese education focused on the establishment of a National Minimum Curriculum (NMC).

Current concerns

The National Minimum Curriculum (NMC)

The future for the increasing inclusive arrangements for children with disability in regular education looks better now because of another important

TABLE 2: Extra staff in regular schools and teaching staff in special schools (derived from NMC – GO2, 2000, para.2.2)

	Totals		Student/ Staff ratio
STATE SCHOOLS			
Fully trained facilitators (2 years part-time)	33		
Kindergarten trained teachers (Assistants)	148		
Casual (untrained) assistants	197		
Peripatetic teachers of the hearing impaired	12		
Peripatetic teachers of the visually impaired	2		
Total in state schools		392	
CHURCH SCHOOLS			
Trained facilitators and untrained assistants	110	110	
Total in regular education		502	1.2:1
SPECIAL SCHOOLS			
Teachers	52		
Kindergarten teachers (Assistants)	80		
Nurses	6		
Total in state schools		138	2:1

development in Maltese education. The 1988 Education Act had vested the Minister of Education with the power to set National Minimum Curricula (NMC) for all schools. Brief NMC's had thus been developed for Kindergarten (1989), Primary (1989) and Secondary (1990). These were criticised harshly mainly because they were documents produced and owned only by the Education administration and hardly affecting the practice in the schools (Wain *et al.*, 1995). Thus, when these were due for review in 1996 the Minister of Education called for 'a broad process of consultation involving the social partners and the general public'. Moreover, one document from kindergarten to secondary levels was to be produced 'to drive the point that education from 3 to 16 years is a continuous experience' (NMC, 1999, p.17).

This process is taking longer than envisaged, and has been carried on through three administrations: the review was put in motion in 1996 by a Nationalist

Government, the first meeting of the NMC Steering Committee was held in 1997 under a Labour Government, and the final legislative document was published in 1999 under the current Nationalist Government, with its review and implementation envisaged to take at least 5 years. The new document is expected to have a wider impact, given that national consensus is being sought along the way. Moreover, this is good news for inclusive education because the idea of 'a quality education for all' permeates the whole document. Four of its 15 principles concern inclusive education directly: Principle 1 – A quality education for all; Principle 2 – Respect for diversity; Principle 8 – Inclusive education; and Principle 9 – A more formative assessment.

Wide consensus is also being achieved because of the composition of the NMC Steering Committee. Chaired by the Assistant Director for Curriculum, the committee included representatives from the Education Division within the Ministry of Education, the Faculty of Education of the University of Malta, the Malta Union of Teachers, state schools, the Association of Private Schools, the Association of School Councils and the National Youth Council. Moreover, continuous consultation was held with all stakeholders including a meeting with the members of all School Councils. At least two widely watched lengthy television discussions of its implications have been held. Moreover, after the publication of the legislative document in 1999, 18 working groups consisting of representatives from the Education Division and the University, as well as the schools, were set up to develop a strategy for the implementation of the various aspects of the curriculum. Some of these groups cut across stages of schooling and were particularly relevant to inclusive education, such as those on Inclusive Education itself (NMC - G02, 2000), on Assessment Policy, on Personal and Social Development, Differentiated Teaching, and Democracy in Schools. Each Working Group had to address four questions relevant to its theme: (1) Relevant current practice in the light of the NMC; (2) Challenges faced by schools and teachers in implementing the NMC; (3) Areas where support is required; and (4) A plan of action with long-, medium- and short-term goals. A 3-day National Conference was then held in June 2000, attended by 600 educators and parents, to discuss the documents that were consequently further modified.

The present author was the rapporteur for the Working Group on Inclusive Education (NMC - G02, 2000). The working group functioned like a focus group made up of 13 members drawn from different agencies concerned with inclusive education: the Assistant Director and the Education Officer for Inclusion and Special Educational Needs, Michael King (chair) and Frank Mallia; the Chairperson of the National Commission Persons with Disability, Joe Camilleri; a parent of a child with Down Syndrome, Louisa Grech; two lecturers from the Department of Psychology, University of Malta, Paul Bartolo (Rapporteur) and

Elena Tanti Burlo; three Heads of Special schools, George Borg, Carmen Cascun, and Pauline Sammut; a teacher in a special school, Judith Torre; a trainee facilitator in a primary school, Teresa Bugeja; and the Church Curia representative on matters concerning disability issues in Church Schools, Rev. Dominic Scerri. Three meetings totalling seven hours were held in addition to the 1-hour workshop attended by 60 persons at the National Conference.

The issues raised by the Working Group's report will be reviewed under five main headings: mainstreaming versus inclusive education, the role of special education facilities, the training of personnel for inclusive education, parent participation, and procedural concerns. Rather long extracts will be cited to allow the reader to get a feel for the discourse of the actual document.

Mainstreaming vs inclusive education

The Working Group has first of all highlighted the contrast between the statements of principles of inclusive education that permeate the whole NMC document and the failure of this document to address the contrasting streaming set up. Thus the NMC document calls for respect for student diversity as 'a moral responsibility' of a society that

> 'believes in the broadening of democratic boundaries, in the fostering of a participatory culture, in the defence of the basic rights of children, in the constant struggle against all those factors that prevent the students' different abilities from being brought to fruition and in the safeguarding and strengthening of our country's achievements in the social and cultural fields.' (NMC, 1999, Principle 8)

> 'Each school is endowed with a vast repertoire of skills, experiences and needs. This diversity, allied with the individual and social differences evident in the student population, enables and requires a pedagogy based on respect for and the celebration of difference.' (NMC, 1999, Principle 2)

However, the Working Group pointed out how these principles were not consistently addressed in the NMC document:

> 'While the above principles of democracy in the schools, inclusive education, respect for diversity and differentiated teaching

permeate the NMC document, this falls short of specifically addressing the issue of streaming which is the antithesis of those same principles.' (NMC - G02, 2000, para. 1)

This failure was not in fact a slip of the pen. The NMC steering committee had initially advocated the establishment of a time frame for the removal of streaming from Maltese schools. But this had to be subsequently given up under pressure from education and parent groups involved in the discussion of earlier NMC drafts. The acceptance of inclusion as the politically correct view of education, accompanied by a strong opposition among educators and parents to the removal of the streaming system in Malta, is a very clear indication that the inclusion philosophy has not yet been really accepted, as was observed by one of our curriculum specialists, Dr Carmel Borg, in a television debate. The issue had arisen also at the closing session of the NMC conference in June 2000, and two different strategies for addressing the problem were proposed.

There are those who advocate the removal of streaming in the short term. The NMC - G02 working group appeared to suggest this position in categorically denouncing the streaming system:

'The present policy whereby the upper primary school classes in state schools are streamed academically goes squarely against the whole philosophy of Inclusive Education; indeed, these practices seriously contradict the very cornerstone of the inclusion process. Streaming goes against all concepts of individualised teaching ... The current early selective system of streaming based on one-shoe-fits-all national examination system, with its backwash effect on whole-class unilevel teaching is regarded as directly opposed to inclusion. ... Inclusion of all children can only be realised through multilevel teaching and assessment that enables the registration of progress by each and every student along progressive and multifaceted standards rather than mere success or failure on a single, static instrument' (NMC - G02, 2000, para. 3.1).

The other view suggests that inclusive practice be established gradually alongside current streaming arrangements which would then give way smoothly to the new practices. This seems to be the position favoured by our politicians. The Labour Party spokesperson for Education has made this view explicit:

'Fundamentalist holy crusades might help you to feel self-righteous but are you being effective?

Generate short term wins through step by step changes, making sure that changes are well planned, implemented carefully and adequately resourced.

Instead of utopian reforms on a grand scale go for piecemeal engineering which is less risky and less controversial.

Look for the possibility of reaching reasonable compromises, improving the situation by democratic methods.

No ultimate and irreversible victory is guaranteed. The struggle continues.' (Bartolo, 2000, pp.119-120)

Though the Working Group gave the impression that they wanted a quick abolition of streaming, their concrete suggestions in fact reflected the above gradual promotion of inclusive practice:

a. In order to gradually diminish the need for streaming and the normative examinations that feed it, all personnel in inclusive education must work at producing innovative teaching and learning and assessment materials and curriculum and lesson organisation that respects the diversity and individual needs of children. The production and pooling of educational material for diversity should be one of the specific roles of agencies responsible for inclusive education in the Education Division. In this regard also, there should be an explicit structure to encourage and enable the full use and sharing of existing resources found in different special centres, such as the hydro therapy pool, the multi-sensory room, occupational therapy and physiotherapy services, I.T. equipment.

b. The assessment of children with SEN should provide a model for formative assessment, that is: (i) it should consist of a profiling system that is not limited to cognitive matters but also the profiling of wider aspects of children's development and activities; and (ii) it should be criterion referenced: showing what the child can do at any particular point in time and what is the next step for progress (NMC - G02, 2000, para. 4.2.2).

This is the situation we are currently experiencing in Malta. It is interesting to note how current inclusive moves within a streaming context sometimes lead to plainly inconsistent practices. Thus students with disability who cannot make the required grade in the entrance examinations have been given the right to still opt to attend Junior Lyceums with an individual assistant when that right is not allowed to non-disabled students (Bartolo *et al.*, 1999). Similarly, while fighting against streaming and examinations, the Working Group reflected the concern of

parents to obtain any possible special examination arrangement to ensure their children with disability are not hindered from showing their abilities and acquiring a place in the top streams of their schools. Such inconsistent practices may indeed be a feature of pluralistic societies (Norwich, 1996). The problem in Maltese educational practice is more pronounced because of the centralised education system described in the introduction, which has not so far allowed for different regional or school-based policies and practices. This allows little room for even thoughtful partial experimentation with innovative practices.

Conditionally 'admitted' rather than 'included'

Contrasting policies and practices have had an impact on the actual experience of children with disability in mainstream schools. The mainstreaming of a larger proportion of children with SEN (69% - see Table 1) has been achieved through what has now been popularised in Malta as the *facilitator* system. Children with SEN have been admitted into regular schools, also with the approval of the Teachers' Union, on the condition that they have an assistant to facilitate their inclusion in classroom activities. In this way it has been assured that the mainstreaming of these children does not interfere with the whole class teaching in the preparation of non-disabled students for the streaming system. However, this has led to a very high use of individual assistants (see Table 2) while raising concerns about how far the mainstreaming of these students has indeed gone into their inclusion in regular classroom activities. The NMC - G02 report spells out these very practical concerns very strongly:

a. First *of all this high ratio of facilitators to students with SEN has been the source of serious financial concern in the Education Division.* It needs to be stated, however, that the *overall* cost of educating children with SEN in regular schools may still not be higher than if they were educated in special schools. Moreover, inclusion should not be seen primarily as a cost-reducing exercise in education, but as a more effective way of respecting basic human rights. However, inclusion is also regarded as the most cost-effective educational system if planned and implemented properly. The Education Division is trying to address the financial concern by assigning facilitators (through a Statementing Board set up in 1997) to more than one child with SEN who are now deemed to have a 'shared facilitator'. This is a partial solution that requires a re-framing of the facilitation system as is stated below.

b. Secondly, *the facilitator system has sometimes led to discrimination against students with SEN*:

- There have been a number of students with SEN who were not allowed to start their schooling at three years because of the lack of provision of a facilitator, or who were forced to stay at home because they lost their current facilitator who could not be immediately replaced for one reason or another.
- Moreover, this has led to an intolerable situation where children with SEN are literally sent back home if their facilitator fails to attend school.

c. Thirdly, *the facilitation system has raised important questions about how far the facilitator is in fact promoting the inclusion rather than the mainstreaming of the child with SEN.* In a substantial number of instances, it has been observed that the facilitator is given full responsibility for the child with SEN. This inhibits interaction between the child and the teacher and often leads to the facilitator being engaged in separate individual activity with the child rather than promoting the child's engagement in the regular activities of the classroom peers (e.g. Galea, 1999). In this regard, it is significant that in at least one case, a student in Form I secondary refused to have the support of an extra assistant because he preferred to have instead the support of his peers (Bartolo, 1997). On the other hand, there are also a number of instances, especially where the facilitator has been trained for the post (Abela, 1998; Galea, 1999) where the facilitator has promoted the acceptance of the child by the teacher and by peers for successful inclusion.

- In this regard, the Working Group was informed that a number of schools were organising activities for students that were not in the true spirit of Inclusive Education. For example, disabled students were being sent regularly for 'activities' at places such as the *Razzett tal-Ħbiberija* (a facility with swimming pool, horse riding and other provisions for persons with disability) while the rest of their peers carried on with regular school activities. Experiences at the *Razzett tal-Ħbiberija* could be equally shared by all students. Such segregationist practices infringe on the disabled child's educational entitlement and go directly against the spirit of the National Minimum Curriculum's holistic approach.

d. Fourthly, *from the school's side, there is often a lack of 'ownership' and responsibility for facilitators and children with SEN.* They are both perceived as being out of the mainstream organisation of education and only marginally and conditionally 'admitted' rather than 'included' (NMC -- G02, 2000, para. 2.2).

Two further illustrations of discrimination reported in para. b. above, were pointed out in the report concerning the way schools deal with medication and incontinence needs of students with disability:

b. It is also reported that teachers' union directives regulate that medication cannot be administered to a pupil by any member of the school staff. This results in a number of pupils who are still at home and cannot attend school because no proper decision has yet been taken on such a matter. It is only in instances where the parents agree to administer the medication themselves that pupils are allowed to attend school. Correct regulations and procedures regarding the dispensing of medicine to students in schools are still not clear. This state of affairs is unacceptable.

c. At present there are no clear procedures on who should take on the task of changing incontinence pads in the case of students who are incontinent. The nomenclatures *'to support children with disabilities during school sessions, meals, toileting, dressing and undressing'* which is found in the list of duties in the call for application for kindergarten assistants, and also *'to assist children under his/her care during toileting, ambulating and feeding'* as stated in Appendix B of the agreement reached between the Government and the Malta Union of Teachers, are still being debated for their correct interpretation (NMC - G02, 2000, para. 2.3).

Though the teacher's shedding of responsibility for the child with SEN on to the child's assistant is reported in other countries as well (e.g. in Italy: Piazza, 1996), in Malta the problem has been larger due to the rapid pace of mainstreaming without adequate teacher preparation.

The role of special facilities

Another issue addressed by the Working Group on inclusive education is the role of special schools. Despite the discourse about the closure of special schools in the 1990s, there is now a general understanding that some form of segregated special education facilities for children with more severe learning difficulties will be maintained. The report itself suggests that:

'Within the spirit of the Salamanca Statement on special needs education, the existing special schools can form a valuable and integral part of the inclusive system by assuming a more supportive role. They should therefore be developed into centres of human and material resources, where professional advice could be sought and specialised equipment made available. They should provide specialised support for teachers and students in inclusive settings and act as standard bearers in the introduction of innovative

approaches to the education of children with special educational needs. These centres should be a reference point for assessment and teaching processes.' (NMC – G02, 2000, para. 3.5)

This suggestion, however, presents difficulties in the Maltese situation. Maltese special education had not yet become specialised before the development of mainstreaming. Thus, the heads of special schools on the working committee lamented that:

'Even in special schools, however, there is a lack of specialised staff since professional training has not been adequately addressed by the Education Division. Training in these schools is being organised by the individual school administrators and carried out according to the needs of each particular school; however, there is still a lot to be done. For instance, these schools lack the regular services of some professionals, such as psychologists, physiotherapists and social workers and others. The services of occupational therapists are non-existent and sorely missed. This makes the use of a transdisciplinary team approach in the development of an IEP for students more difficult to practice. In fact there is as yet insufficient formal and informal methods of assessment and programming for children in special schools.' (NMC – G02, 2000, para. 2.1; see Borg, 2000).

The Education Division is thus faced with a situation where, while intending to play down the role of special schools, it needs to invest in the training of special school personnel and facilities if these are indeed to serve as support for inclusive schooling. In fact, it is the NGO Eden Foundation which has been at the forefront providing expert support services for children who are in schools and also attend its centre (e.g. Bartolo, 2000). This is recognised by the Education Division which partly funds the Eden programmes, but the Education Division is faced with the need to provide training to the staff of its own special schools.

We also have an interesting arrangement, termed *reverse integration* in one of our schools, whereby non-disabled children regularly join those with disability in a special unit. This arose in Gozo, the smaller of the two Maltese islands which has a population of 25,000. There is no special school on this island, but rather one special unit located inside the building of a primary school. This has allowed for the possibility of children from the unit joining in the regular classes for some lessons and vice versa (Sultana, 1995).

Training of personnel for inclusion and special educational needs

The Working Group pointed out the need for training personnel in inclusion and special educational needs. This has been provided at two levels: for qualified teachers and for facilitators. The first evening two-year Diploma for teachers in special educational needs started in 1989. By the end of 2001, around 60 teachers will have been trained. The first two-year evening training course for facilitators of inclusive education started in 1994. By the end of 2001 around 200 facilitators will have been fully trained.

The Faculty of Education has produced a comprehensive programme of training and is committed to provide courses relevant to the needs of our schools. The continuing development of this training programme is regarded as essential for meeting the needs of children with disability.

Parental involvement

Another important issue raised by the Working Group is the level of parental involvement in the education of children with SEN. This is described as an essential ingredient for success in inclusive education:

'Inclusive Education can only work effectively if parents and educators work in partnership forming a healthy dynamic based on mutual synergy. To this end a healthier approach should be sought to encourage better communication between the education team and the parents. Parents' participation in the education of their child should be accepted as a civil right. Parents' lifelong commitment to their children's quality of life, their intensive and extensive relationship and interaction with their children, should be fully appreciated. Since children with SEN, especially at younger ages, are unable to assert their own needs and rights, parents should be regarded as their primary advocates (NMC - G02, 2000, para. 3.3).

On the other hand, the Working Group noted parents are not yet sufficiently encouraged to participate:

While parents are becoming more vociferous advocates for their children, as is their right, the Working Group felt that there is still not enough recognition of the parents' right for advocacy for and potential contribution to their children's education. Currently, parents feel that they have to struggle to get the necessary support for their child's education. Moreover, there is concern among

educators that there is a lack of a supportive network to support the parents as early as possible to understand and engage constructively with their child. It was noted that information and services to parents are too much dependent on the particular parent's persistence, assertiveness and other personal qualities.' (NMC – G02, 2000, para. 2.5; Bartolo, 1997).

It is to be noted again that an increase in parental involvement has been greatly influenced by the setting up of the parent groups mentioned earlier, as well as by the positive experience offered to parents at the Eden Foundation (Bartolo, 1994). From the very opening of Eden services in 1993, the parents were present at the multiprofessional case conferences about their children – a new experience also for professionals who had to learn to adapt their thinking and discourse to the new dynamics created by parental presence. The parents were also asked to share in early intervention work which occurred in their homes. Moreover, all reports were given to the parents and any information in their children's files was available on demand. Parents now are also asked to join tutors for a day to get to know more closely how their children are being supported (Mercieca, 2000).

Planning the future

Developing school-based inclusive practice

Given the above situation, the Working Group saw the main future need as that of developing schools that take responsibility for the quality education of all their students. The following suggestions were made:

'Since inclusive education involves radical changes in attitudes and practice, training of all personnel involved is an essential pre-requisite to the implementation of a successful inclusive education policy. Training should ideally be carried out by the University of Malta through direct and active consultation with the Education Division, The National Commission of Persons with Disability, The Federation of Organisations for Persons with Disabilities, voluntary organisations dealing with disability issues, heads of school and teachers working in the field, relevant professionals and pre-eminently disabled persons and their families. Substantial gains could be made if such training programmes also made use of distance learning methods and the use of distance learning programmes from overseas universities.

In order to ensure school and classroom based responsibility and support for children with SEN, it is recommended that:

a. Seminars and on-going in-service courses on issues essential for the implementation of inclusive pedagogical methods are required, besides specialised training in specific areas. There must also be the exposition of good practice for schools to follow which would promote and enhance more effective teaching and learning.

b. A well planned programme of training for decision makers at the school level should be devised. This would provide opportunities for heads and assistant heads of school and school councils to understand the issues of disability and inclusive education.

c. In tandem with (b) there should be a programme of training for the regular teachers – both those currently in training through the B.Ed. programme, and also for those already teaching through in-service training. Moreover, both teachers and facilitators need to be trained to work collaboratively together. It is recommended that there should be a structure that establishes the provision of at least a brief induction period of training for each teacher in preparation for the child with SEN who is joining his or her class the following year.

d. Our aim should be that support for inclusion should be first through the regular teacher and then through regular teachers who have specialised in education for children with particular types of SEN. Thus the training of qualified teachers in support work at post-graduate level should be ensured.

e. Training at the level of facilitators who will be mostly engaged in one-to-one support needs to be continued and accelerated as much as possible (see Tanti Burlò, 1997). Training needs to ensure:

- Appropriate commitment to inclusive education: the selection of candidates should ensure that they have appropriate attitudes, and the training system should allow for candidates to leave the system if found to be inappropriate;
- Appropriate attitudes for and knowledge of the principles and skills in the practice of inclusion;
- Creative problem solving in supporting the child with SEN, but also based on sound knowledge and skills in supporting children with particular types of disability;
- Ability to collaborate in the development and implementation of IEPs and in the reporting of children's progress;

- Ability to communicate and collaborate with other professionals and parents.

f. Steps should be immediately taken for the development of liaison between special schools and regular schools so that existing human and material resources in special schools should become available as resources for training, equipment and other support for inclusive schooling. In this regard, also, specialised training should be provided to staff working in specialist centres who need to be clearly committed to provide very specialised support.' (NMC – G02, 2000, para. 4.2.1)

> 'Regular schools and teachers need to have more knowledge and skills in understanding and meeting the learning needs of the diversity of students. Various disabilities often require specific teaching approaches and technologies, such as alternative and augmentative means of communication.' (NMC - G02, 2000, para. 3.4)

While the above are measures to be taken by central agencies, the Working Group made another important suggestion that is much more congruent with its recommendation for school ownership of all children, and is indeed necessary for the above measures to be effective:

> 'There is a need for the whole school together with its school council to make a written commitment to and assure formal responsibility for fostering the school's Inclusive Education programme. This concern should be reflected in the school development plan as well as the school ethos.' (NMC - G02, 2000, para. 3.1)

More parent partnership

An important institutional recommendation of the Working group is expected to have important consequences for strengthening the voice of the parents:

> 'It is recommended that the parents' participation in their children's education should be statutorily established. For instance, it should become established practice that:

a. Parent representatives should have a place on all policy making and decision-making boards about children with SEN.

b. There should be an early system of screening both in pre-school and on entry to school that ensures support for and involvement by the parents in their child's education. Because each parent is often faced with the challenge of a child with SEN for the first time, it is essential that an information system be provided to support parents as soon as they suspect or are told that their child has SEN. This may include both leaflets or booklets by particular schools or the education division as well as relevant contacts such as self-help groups and other institutions.

c. It is recommended that the University takes more direct action to ensure that the training of all professionals who work with children, both medical and educational or otherwise, includes opportunities for understanding the importance and potential of parent involvement in their children's education.' (NMC – G02, 2000, para. 4.3.5).

More planning, collaboration, accessibility and accountability

Four important procedural aspects in developing inclusive practice were highlighted by the Working Group: (a) the need for planning for transitions of children with disability from home to school, one school year to the next, kindergarten to primary, to secondary, to post-secondary and work situations; (b) the need for collaboration within schools and among professionals and parents to achieve the supportive networks which are an essential feature of inclusive schooling (Steinback & Steinback, 1990); (c) the need for accessibility of information about inclusion through leaflets, booklets and other information material in alternative media including an Inclusion Website – this is already available as the webpage of the National Commission Persons with Disability on www.knpd.org; and (d) the need for accountability of assessment and educational practices. With regards to this fourth need, the following specific recommendations were made:

a. A structure need be provided for accountability of inclusive practice through a support structure within the school as well as at Division of Education and national levels.

b. Provisions must be made for the appointment of Co-ordinators for Inclusion Support Services. These co-ordinators should be responsible for the provision of Resources in schools and the execution of correct procedures within the Inclusive Education Programme.

c. Schools should have guidelines for ensuring that inclusion is managed appropriately for a quality education for the child with SEN. Such guidelines would ensure support for parents, proper procedures for assessments and provisions, adequate inclusion of the students in classroom activities, and adequate accountability.

d. Such guidelines have to establish particularly the regular development and review of transdisciplinary Individual Educational Programmes for each child, with clear indication of responsibilities and time-frames for ensuring the child's progress.

e. Provision need be made for ongoing monitoring of all education practices through qualitative and quantitative audit since continual evaluation of practice is necessary for effective improvement (NMC – G02, 2000, para. 4.3.4).

Conclusion

The development of inclusive schools is a long-term process, which has to be maintained through training and commitment at the school level supported by the political and educational system. In Malta, even though the process has gathered momentum only over the past decade, it has picked an ever increasing wider network of players from the political and educational field, and is leading to the development of structures that sustain inclusive practice. It is also very useful for practitioners to have in hand a nationally shared vision promoted by the NMC for a quality education for all:

> 'The ultimate aim of the National Minimum Curriculum is to develop an educational ethos that stimulates the development of students' potential without undermining the principles of solidarity and co-operation.' (NMC, 1999, Principle 1)

> 'To this end the educational community must develop a system that identifies, from an early stage, the potential and needs of all students. As a result, programmes can be developed that maintain students on course to continuously achieve progress.' (NMC, 1999, Principle 2)

There is thus a strong and wide enough impetus to give hope to many that we can turn our islands into a centre of excellence in inclusive education training and practice.

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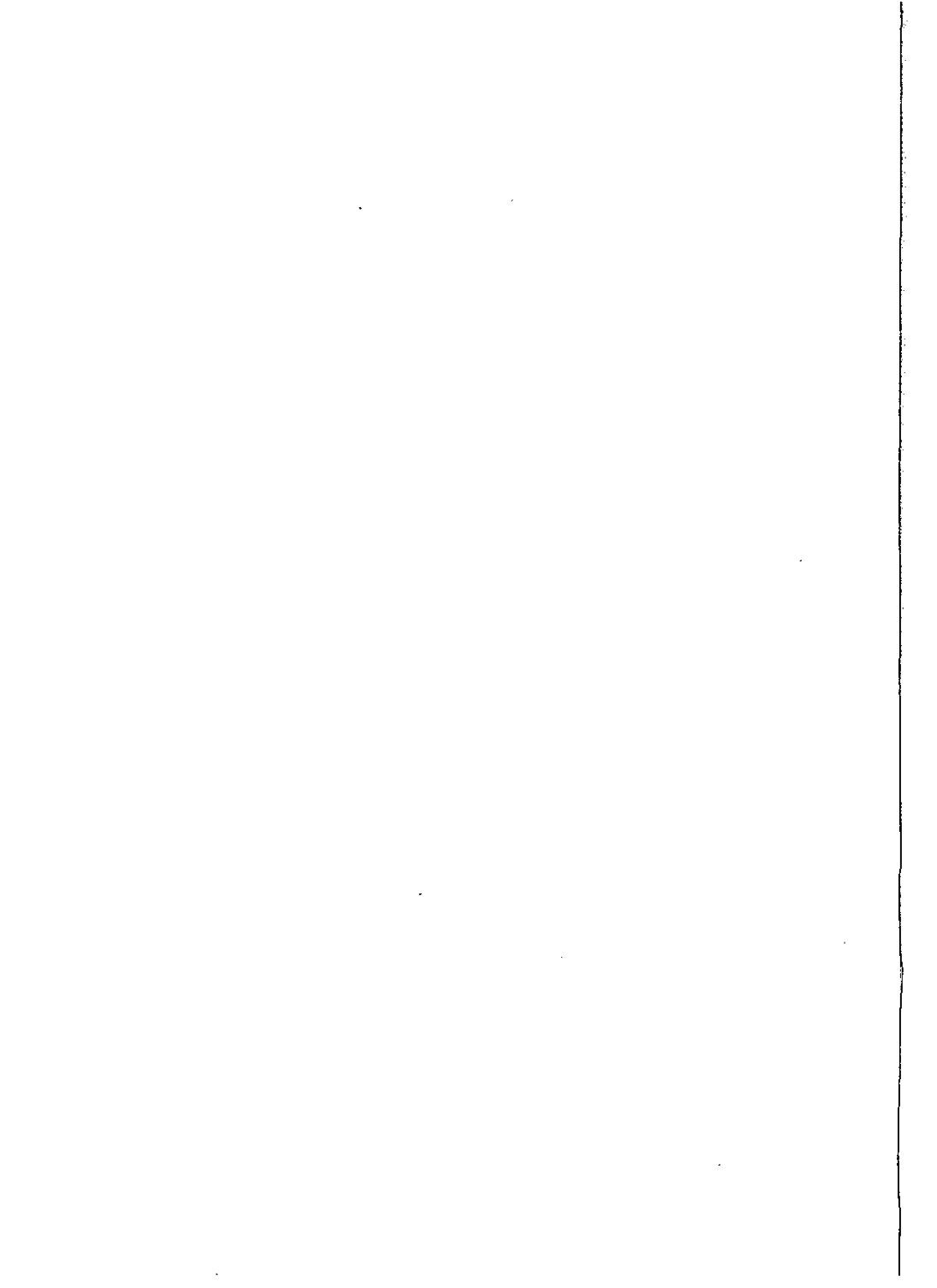
SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

MICHAL Al-YAGON
MALKA MARGALIT

Abstract – *The present paper aims to describe the Israeli special education system historically and currently, as related in particular to the 1988 National Special Education Law, and to appraise future systemic trends. Discussion focuses on three major aspects: (a) changes in special education concepts and ideological perceptions; (b) systemic structural changes locally and nationally; and (c) curricular and intervention perspectives. The conceptual/ideological review includes changes in theoretical approaches to definitions and classifications, which influenced implementation issues such as diagnostic and intervention planning. The discussion of systemic structural changes focuses on the expanding process of inclusion for children with special needs into the regular education system and on the growing process of decentralisation in resource distribution toward local and regional support centres. Diverse solutions are examined to resolve the enduring major conflict between the need to provide the optimal help and support to meet the special needs of each individual child and at the same time to strive for the highest level of inclusion. Developments in curricula and intervention are described, consisting of revised goals, modified definitions, and new approaches to remedial education and intervention, including the integration of new technologies. In appraising future trends, the importance is highlighted of appropriate modifications in teacher training, student skill development, and setting design, as well as the evaluating and supervising resource distribution and treatment efficacy.*

Introduction

$\mathcal{T}$he Israeli education system consists of 1.6 million students from three different sectors: Jews, Arabs, and Druze. The national Ministry of Education is responsible for these three sectors and is divided into five regions. Over the last three decades, the Israeli education system has been characterised by increasing autonomy and decentralisation for its schools. This process has led to a gradual shift in decision making from the Ministry of Education to the regions and to the schools themselves, enabling the latter to exercise their own educational initiatives in areas such as curriculum development, instructional methods, etc. It should be noted that these changes reflect the Israeli social reality featuring different religions, ethnic groups, and cultures in each of the three sectors (Zilbershtein *et al.*, 1995).

The special and inclusive education system in Israel provides services to less than a 10% of the total population and manifests the same systemic trends toward school autonomy and decentralisation. These trends, as well as other processes that have come into play historically and currently, will be the focus of this paper.

Two basic principles guide the field of special education in Israel: the promotion of human dignity and the aspiration for equal opportunity. Each and every child is entitled to learn, according to his or her own abilities. In order to provide equal opportunities, a range of special support systems and specifically adapted instructional modes have been developed for children with a variety of difficulties and disabilities. This paper will first provide a brief historical review of Israeli special education, including its major legislation. Then the current situation in Israeli special education will be described, and future developmental trends at the beginning of the new millennium will be appraised, with a focus on three major issues:

1 Changes in special education concepts and ideological perceptions.
2. Systemic structural changes locally and nationally.
3. Curricular and intervention perspectives.

Historical review

The first educational institute for children with special needs was established in Jerusalem in 1902, before the establishment of the State of Israel. This institute for children with visual impairments and blindness was supported by voluntary groups of parents. It was followed by a special school for children with mental retardation (established in 1929), and schools for children with auditory and/or visual impairments (established in 1932). With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the legislation of the national education law, more special education schools were established. The National Education Law mandated that any child between 5 to 18 years of age was entitled to free education, regardless of individual needs or difficulties. A direct result of these historical developments was the establishment of new, segregated educational settings for children whose disabilities posed formidable obstacles for the regular education system (e.g., mental retardation, sensory impairment, physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy). In parallel with these special settings, special classes were set up in regular schools (Alon-Reshef, 1994; Bendel, Palti, Vinter & Or-Noy, 1989; Liberman, 1991; Marbach, 1974; Margalit, 1980; Shprinzak & Bar, 1988).

Although the National Education Law provided educational services to children with special needs, it was the Israeli National Special Education Law of 1988 (Yunay, 1992) that had the most significant impact on the instruction and

treatment of these children. The law stated that an 'exceptional' child consists of an individual 3-21 years of age who has developmental difficulties (physical, cognitive, emotional, or behavioural) that restrict his or her adjustment and functioning. The objective of this law was to promote the abilities and competencies of exceptional children in order to support their inclusion into society.

The special education law defined entitlement for support in accordance with the medical-psychological model of pathology that emphasises a significant deviation from the standard in critical areas of functioning. The law also used the developmental model (age range of 3-21 years) in order to explain disabilities and their outcome in maladjusted functioning. Developmental delays were discussed in terms of various functional aspects, and a diversity of educational and treatment goals were suggested (e.g. promoting skills and abilities, reducing deficits, etc.).

According to the Bendel *et al.* review in 1989, 11% of the child population in Israel evidenced developmental and adjustment difficulties, resembling the percentages of other countries. However, in 1998, an Israeli Ministry of Education survey reported that the special education system provided services to less than a 10% of the total student population. This discrepancy may be an outcome of budgetary restrictions.

The major contribution of the special education law to the changes in the Israeli special education system will next be discussed, with regard to its concepts and ideology, structure, curriculum and intervention.

Changes in special education concepts and ideological perceptions

Variation over time in the labels given in the literature to students in the special education stream may reflect systemic changes in concepts and ideology. Early terms such as 'handicap', 'deficiency', and 'uneducable' demonstrated the perception that injury was the constant, unchangeable hallmark of these students. The terms, 'exceptional children', 'handicapped children', or 'special education children', underscore differences and abnormality, implying that regular education failed to teach these students as expected for their chronological ages (Hegarty, 1993). Therefore, it is not surprising that, in its first stages, Israeli special education was devised as an alternative educational system with separate curricula and instructional methods. Early treatments emphasised 'special instruction' and 'special settings' in separate schools or classrooms. This focus on illness and injury developed through a medical-psychological classification that emphasised the differences between children with and without disabilities (Hegarty, 1995). It should be noted that the Israeli Special Education Law of 1988 used the global term 'exceptional child', in contrast with the term 'child

with special needs' that has recently been employed by many countries and which emphasises the need for a dynamic perception of the child's functioning and needs. Nevertheless, the law's implementation programme did provide ample detail on the different classifications of disabilities in order to calculate entitlement for services.

Today, in Israel, as internationally, the predominant terminology emphasises person-first language use and sensitivity to labelling among individuals with special needs (Folkins, 1992).

Similarly to the model used by medical professionals, the special education field also invested substantial resources into advancing differential diagnoses between classifications of disability (i.e., autism vs. mental retardation vs. learning disability, etc.). Efforts to discriminate between disabilities influenced several aspects of special education. Schools began specialising in the treatment of specific childhood exceptionalities, and specialised teacher training programs and curricula were developed (Margalit, 1999).

Figure 1 presents the current distribution of special education students according to their disabilities. As can be seen in the figure, students with learning disabilities comprise the largest group (40%). Second and third in size, respectively, are the groups with mild mental retardation (11.5%) and with behaviour disorders (8.2%). The 'others' category (17%) includes students with visual impairment, language delay, and others. In the 1999-2000 school year, the total population of students attending special education settings was 35,492.

FIGURE 1: The distribution of special education students according to their disabilities 1999-2000 school year
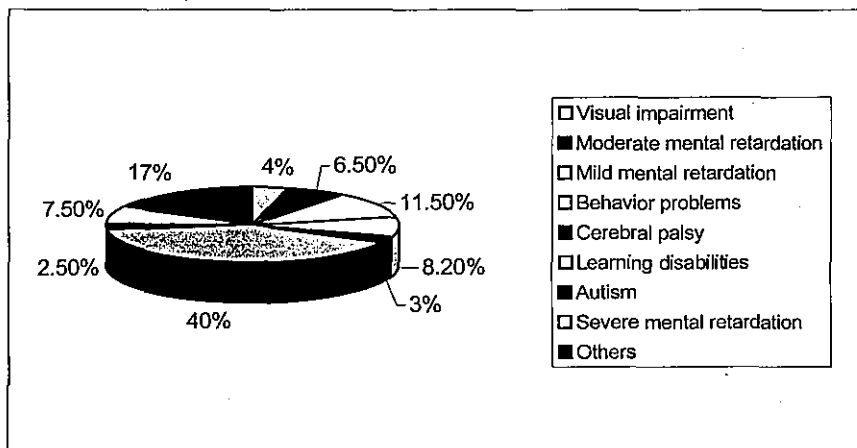
In recent years, an important theoretical argument has been raised concerning 'exceptional' classification models and their significance for conceptualising and implementing special education (Skidmore, 1996). To what extent has differential diagnosis contributed to educational programmes? Do children with different diagnoses receive different treatments? Has the link between diagnosis and instruction contributed to an improvement in children's functioning?

The answer to these questions emphasises two contrasting approaches to exceptionality classifications (Skidmore, 1996). The medical model, on the one hand, upholds the importance of the distinctions drawn between disability groups. According to the researchers and educators endorsing this approach, accurate diagnostic assessment and the planning of specialised educational treatment in line with this diagnosis are prerequisites for successful intervention for students in special education.

On the other hand, a second group of empiricists and education professionals have argued the unfeasibility of validating the clinical model and its frequent irrelevance while planning educational programmes. Advocates of the non-categorising model have corroborated their approach with the inconsistent findings demonstrated by research comparing formally classified special education students and students with learning difficulties who were not officially classified as having learning disabilities or other accepted diagnostic categories (Algozzine, Ysseldyke & McGue, 1995; Kavale, 1995; Kavale, Fuchs & Scruggs, 1994). Some of these researchers found significant differences between differently diagnosed students, whereas other studies failed to identify such differences. Other researchers focused on the fit between students' disabilities and the special instruction provided. For example, Algozzine and his colleagues evaluated 40 special classes in their 1995 study: 16 classes for students with mild mental retardation, 13 classes for students with learning disabilities, and 11 classes for students with behavioural disorders. In the majority of classes, observations did not reveal a significantly distinct usage of special instructional methods and strategies according to diagnostic classification.

Researchers from both of these approaches, those who accentuate the variance between disability groups and those who underscore the similarities between different students with learning difficulties, have not denied the need for special education students to receive special instruction. Both approaches concur regarding these children's failure to achieve age-appropriate learning levels within the regular educational system, as compared to their normally developing peers. Yet the non-categorising approach is unique in its focus on two weighty conceptual issues (Margalit, 1999). First, this approach asserts that the within-group variance for children with exceptionalities is not less than the between-group variance, thereby impairing the validity of well-accepted classification

procedures. Second, the non-categorising approach highlights ecological and multidimensional models that acknowledge the contribution of environmental variables and individual differences on children's learning (Skidmore, 1996).

Although the debate about the merit of exceptionality classifications deals with theoretical issues, its extensive impact on practical issues ranges from resource allocation, to decision making regarding criteria for entitlement to treatment, to the construction of educational programmes. This debate is also manifested in the usage of terms and appellations. In fact, replacing the term 'exceptional students' with 'students with special needs' represents an attempt to avoid controversial labelling.

In Israel, as in other countries, the special education law comprised a bid to integrate these two approaches. The law conceived a distinct classification for diagnostic and treatment procedures, yet concurrently emphasised the design of the Individualised Education Plans (IEP) that focus on the child's unique characteristics amidst the consideration of the severity of disabilities and needs. The law stipulated that an individual education plan be designed for each student, which will identify his or her particular needs.

Diagnostic procedures constitute another educational issue affected by the debate concerning the relevance of differential diagnosis to educational planning. Researchers have called into question the efficacy of standardised and detailed educational diagnoses that classify students, as compared to a dynamic diagnosis that supports and improves learning not only during the treatment but also during the diagnostic process itself, and that is continually modified according to the child's changing needs and abilities. In Israel, due to the absence of standard diagnostic procedures, the need to develop optimal diagnostic protocols holds crucial significance.

Alongside the changes in special education concepts and ideology, with their theoretical and practical implications, systemic structural modifications have evolved in Israeli special education.

Systemic structural changes in local and national education

This section will discuss the structural changes in Israeli special education, as manifested by (a) the inclusion of special education students within the regular education system, and (b) the decentralisation of special education resources.

Inclusion of special education students

The call for educators to match students who have special needs with local education settings that meet those needs, with as little exclusion as possible,

reflects the perception that neighbourhood schools should serve each and every child, including students with disabilities. Proponents of 'full inclusion', in its extreme, maintain that all students should be students in regular classrooms and receive all the necessary support/treatment services there (Cavett, 1994). Critics of 'full inclusion' assert its ineffectiveness in satisfying the unique needs of all children with disabilities. The development itself of the term 'inclusion' expresses the concept that regular schools should respond to a variety of students' different needs.

Similarly, the Israeli special education law has emphasised a commitment to placing students in the least restrictive environment (Alon-Reshef, 1994; Kauffman, Lloyd, Baker & Riedel, 1995). This commitment highlights the importance of providing support for students' special needs within regular education settings as much as possible; in their own neighbourhood schools if feasible. Likewise, for students who must be referred to separate special education settings, every effort must be made to minimise segregation and exclusion.

There is wide agreement internationally regarding the merit of inclusion into regular education for students with special needs. The United Nations of Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO, 1988, 1995) reported that three quarters of participant countries in their survey had declared an inclusion policy. The shift toward inclusion in regular education has even begun to appear in recent years in countries that in the past maintained segregated settings (Ashman, 1995; Ellger-Rutgardt, 1995; Kimonen & Nevalainen, 1995). However, cross-country research demonstrated wide differences in the perception and application of this principle (Williams, 1993).

An examination of the data for the Israeli special education system reveals a partial, rather than full, acceptance of the inclusion principle. A gradual shift has occurred in the structure of the settings for Israeli special education, in parallel with that of other countries. Over the first 25 years of Israel's existence, the number of children with special needs who attended special schools increased, as did the number of specialised schools. After 1975, with the acceptance of the inclusion approach, the number of special classes within regular schools began to increase, whereas the population attending separate schools began to decline (Alon-Reshef, 1994; Bendel *et al.*, 1989; Liberman, 1991; Marbach, 1974; Margalit, 1980; Shprinzak & Bar, 1988).

Diverse types of 'special classes' were also developed, beyond the initial special classroom that was completely separate despite its location in the regular school. New inclusive classes were implemented where students spent their days partly in regular classes and partly in special classes or where students with and without special needs studied together fully and were taught by two teachers (one regular and one special education teacher). These variations on inclusive

approaches reflect the conceptual transition regarding the term 'setting' – from a physical place such as a special school or classroom to a service that may not have separate physical boundaries yet provides special educational intervention (Repetto & Correa, 1996).

The move from separate schools to special classrooms within regular schools, and, more recently, to a variety of inclusive settings, attests to the Israeli system's increasing recognition of the importance of inclusion into regular education for children with special needs. The continual search for inclusion configurations that will suit children with different needs and abilities, reflects the system's attempts to provide diverse educational solutions to support heterogeneous student populations in their efforts to obtain age appropriate education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1994). The decision to mainstream students with special needs into the regular education system or to place them in special settings must be made in accordance with an assessment of students' unique educational needs and functioning.

Additional support settings for children with special needs have also been developed to support the implementation of the special education law, including multidisciplinary resource centres for students in regular settings and unique programmes for students in segregated settings. Scattered multidisciplinary centres were established by the Ministry of Education adjacent to several regular education schools serving children with special needs. These centres provide assessment, support, intervention and treatment by special education teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, communication clinicians, art/movement/dance therapists, etc. It should be noted that over the last decade, the inclusion principle has been applied to these centres, emphasising the need to bring their services into the classrooms rather than removing children from class in order to visit the centres. Thus, these centres are now seen very rarely in Israel. In addition to the resource centres, unique programmes have been designed targeting children who have severe disabilities such as autism or cerebral palsy and attend special segregated schools. These programmes promote cooperation between special and regular schools, enabling such students with special needs to visit regular school settings on a part time basis. Recently, these students participate in inclusive programmes with intensive support.

Exploring the course of inclusion of special classes into the regular educational system in Israel demonstrates different processes for various disability groups. The first phases of inclusion were exercised only for students with mild disabilities such as learning disabilities, mild mental retardation, and mild behaviour problems. Gradually, the inclusion of students with moderate

and severe disabilities into regular education settings has begun, but these processes are still at an early stage. As illustrated in Figure 2, most separate classes for students with learning disabilities are located within the regular system, whereas most of the classes for students with severe disabilities such as mental retardation or autism continue to be located separately, outside the regular education system.

FIGURE 2: The number of special education classes and regular education classes in Israel in the 1999-2000 school year
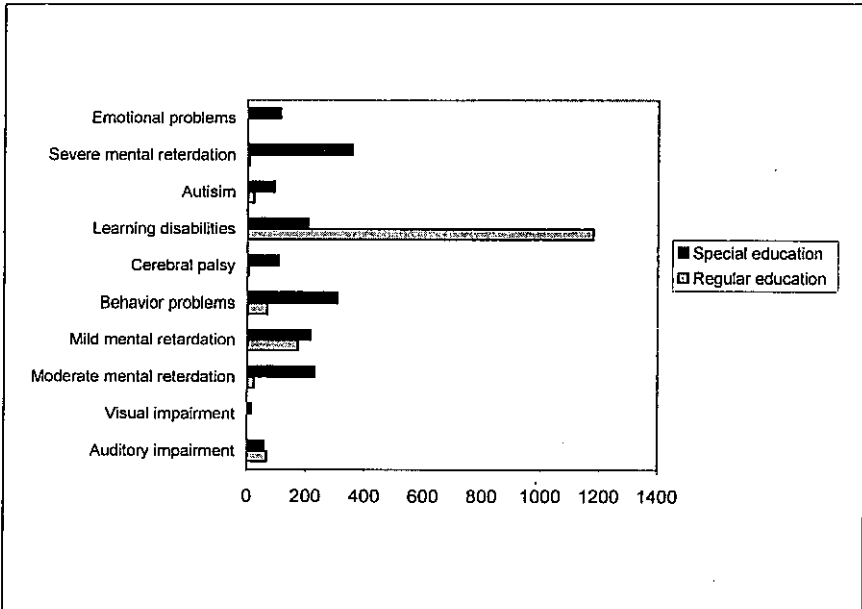
The call for the inclusion of children with special needs into the regular education system must consider the evaluation of the effectiveness of this process. A review of the literature reveals three major axes of evaluation: (a) social development (b) learning achievement, and (c) quality of instruction and treatment.

Social development

Studies have indicated that students with special needs demonstrate less social initiation than do their peers. Inclusion with regular students has been shown to

promote their social skills (Madge, Affleck, & Lawenbraun, 1990; Williams, 1993). On the other hand, studies examining loneliness, social rejection, and friendship among these students demonstrated less consistent outcomes. Margalit (1994) found that, despite inclusion in the regular system, these students expressed high levels of loneliness and fewer social interactions. Sale and Carey (1995) reported that inclusion did not significantly improve the social status of students with special needs. These inconsistent results might be attributed to the studies' usage of different variables and conceptions, and their examination of different disabilities. Investigators of this axis of social development have highlighted the question of self-concept among students with special needs. Inclusion into a regular setting should involve students with similar disabilities in order to avoid the development of a sense of abnormality (Stainback, Stainback, East & Sapon-Shevin, 1994).

Learning achievement

Research that explored this issue demonstrated that different students learn at a variety of efficacy levels in different settings. Researchers reported inconsistent findings on the learning achievement among students following inclusion (Hegarty, 1991; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991). These findings reflect the need to implement a graduated sequence of distinct inclusive settings in order to suit individual needs (Hegarty, 1993).

Quality of instruction and treatment

The examination of teaching and treatment quality likewise has not reported consistent outcomes. Supporters of inclusion have cited research that revealed the difficulties demonstrated by most students with special needs in generalising learned skills to other areas. These difficulties suggest that instruction and treatment should be provided directly in the regular classrooms, to reduce the extent of generalisation necessary. Likewise, McWilliam and Bailey (1994) indicated that when treatment of preschool children with special needs was provided in the regular setting, in the presence of their normally developing peers, learned skills demonstrated a high level of generalisation and stability. On the other hand, inclusion opponents (Fuchs and Fuchs, 1995), have argued that the inclusion of students with special needs into different classes and schools raises serious questions about the education settings' ability to provide the same level of intensive, professional instruction and treatment as provided in the special settings. Another issue concerns the emotional responses and motivation of students with special needs when they receive extra instruction in regular settings.

Research has shown that inclusive students preferred to receive their special instruction and treatment outside the regular classes and by special teachers rather than their regular teachers (Pedeliadu, 1995).

In sum, according to these inconsistent evaluations of major aspects of inclusion, researchers have recommended exploring this issue as a philosophical and moral question (Hegarty, 1993). Contemporary communities tend to perceive inclusion as a universal value. Research has shown that segregated settings offer no distinct benefits, suggesting no reason why society should not provide equal educational opportunities (Hegarty, 1993; Kauffman, 1995). Studies have emphasised the importance of searching for diverse solutions to support this process, as no one solution is appropriate for all students (Cole, Mills, Dale & Jenkins, 1991; Hegarty, 1993; Self, Benning, Marston & Magnusson, 1991). For example, the ecological model recommended by Kauffman (1995) emphasised the importance of creating a variety of educational and treatment environments for the different needs and disabilities exhibited by children. In Israel, the emphasis on designing a variety of educational and treatment settings has promoted systemic changes in special education.

Next, the second area of structural change in Israeli special education will be discussed, with regard to the decentralisation of special education resources.

Decentralisation of special education resources

By virtue of the aforementioned inclusion processes in Israel, responsibility for children with special needs has largely shifted from the special education system to the regular education system, emphasising the question of systemic change in the distribution and utilisation of special education resources. Special education resources related to the diagnostic process, special instructional methods, unique treatment modes, special technologies, specialised teacher training, etc. are fundamental to the appropriate education, support, and intervention of students with special needs.

In recent years, the Israeli Ministry of Education has adopted a decentralisation special education policy for resources, as manifested in the establishment of Regional Support Centres in most regions of Israel. These centres hold responsibility for providing services to an entire region or area and for allotting special education resources to the area's various schools and inclusive settings. Governmental distribution of resources (i.e. weekly hours teaching by various teachers and therapists; hours for assessment procedures; specialised materials or curricula; teacher training programmes, etc.) to these support centres is determined by the number of students served by each centre and by their needs in accordance with diagnostic assessment. The basic assumption underlying this

decentralisation was that decisions about the allocation of resources should be made at the local level, in order to enhance their effectiveness and to decrease bureaucratic processes.

The process of decentralisation offers both promises and risks. Although it may promote the efficiency and quality of services, decentralisation may also cause inequity in service provision. Due to this risk, many countries such as England and New Zealand have developed a follow-up procedure to assure that resources do indeed reach their planned goal and to examine the quality of education and treatment provided to children with special needs (Mitchell, 1995). In England, the education system also developed a code of practice that defined the process of distribution and provision of special services (Fletcher-Campbell, 1994; U.K. Department of Education, 1994).

Studies have revealed two trends in resource distribution to regular education settings (Hegarty, 1995; Mitchell, 1995): (1) according to the number of children recognised as having disabilities, in order to meet each child's specific needs; and (2) according to the size of the total setting, to strengthen the educational system as a whole. The implementation of the special education law in Israel attempted to combine these two resource distribution trends. On the one hand, as described above, the Israeli regular education system receives resources through the Regional Support Centres according to the number and needs of the students enrolled who have been formally diagnosed by the educational system as having disabilities. On the other hand, additional support is provided by the Regional Support Centres directly to the regular schools in order to empower their capacity to provide appropriate special education and intervention solutions to children with special needs. This two-pronged approach to resource distribution, combining support of students and of settings, seems to have a potentially important contribution to the process of inclusion (Hegarty, 1995; Mitchell, 1995). However, in Israel, decentralisation of educational resources is still in its early stages, highlighting the need to strengthen its auditing system in order to ensure the quality of services actually received by children with special needs.

Curricular and intervention perspectives

A review of Israeli special education curricula and interventions reveals three major approaches that have characterised this arena since the beginning of Israel's existence. Teachers tend to emphasise one or more of these three approaches based on their examination of children's deficits and level of functioning. The three approaches include:

- *Instruction resembling that of the regular schools as much as possible:* This approach has led to much investment of effort in the instruction of subjects that at times had a low likelihood of success and low relevance for a significant subgroup of these children, due to the instruction's insufficient adaptation to children's special needs.

- *Functional instruction aiming to promote independent life skills:* This approach has focused on functional skills (such as environmental orientation or domestic skills) while relatively neglecting other different areas of instruction.

- *Intervention and treatment focusing on deficits or underdeveloped skills:* This approach has focused on areas of deficiency or underdeveloped skills (such as visual perception or fine motor skills) in order to improve a general level of skills and functioning.

In evaluating the effectiveness of curricula and intervention schemes, students' achievements have been a focus of study. In the early years in Israel, student achievement was assessed on an individual basis, comparing each child's improvement to his or her own baseline performance. However, the inclusion process into the regular school system emphasised the need to assess students with special needs in comparison to their peers. This process accentuated the need to pinpoint the products, achievements, and successes of students with special needs as compared to their peers, whenever planning or evaluating instruction, curricula, and interventions.

A review of the current trends in Israeli special education curricula and intervention reveals two major intervention approaches: one focusing on the student's environment and one focusing on the student's abilities and disabilities. The environmental approach refers to the adaptation of the environment – i.e., of the regular curricula or teaching methods – to suit the child's specific difficulties. Students may receive different modes of instruction to support their learning or tasks of reduced difficulty level related to the same subject matter studied by their peers. In the second approach, interventions focus specifically on students' abilities and disabilities. Students may undergo compensatory treatments to address their particular disability areas (e.g., speech therapy), learn strategic usage of various tools (e.g., technology, alternative communication), and receive skill training (e.g., social skills, behaviour regulation).

Any examination of curricula and interventions at the beginning of the new millennium would be wanting if it failed to describe the contribution of technology to the education system. Technology offers new modes for improving learning processes and modifying tasks to a variety of student needs and abilities. Research

has demonstrated the impact of the integration of technology on instruction and intervention with students who have special needs (Higgins & Boone, 1996). Although some studies indicated difficulties in utilising technology, these difficulties seemed to stem not from the tools themselves but rather from their mode of implementation (Ellsworth, 1994). There is wide agreement that successful technology integration must be combined with teacher training (Ellsworth, 1994; Higgins & Boone, 1996). The possibility of creating a partnership between home and school in this area has also been emphasised (Margalit, 1990).

Summary and future developmental trends

This paper examined the special education system in Israel from three major perspectives. First, changes in special education concepts and ideological perceptions were delineated, focusing on definitions and classifications of disabilities. Second, two major structural, systemic changes at the local and national level were reviewed: the broadening inclusion of special education students and the decentralisation of national resources. Third, changes in curricula, instruction, and interventions were discussed in accordance with conceptual and ideological developments.

This review highlights the strong impact that conceptual and ideological changes have had on decisions related to the implementation of the Israeli special education law. This ideological struggle has influenced diagnostic procedures, curriculum development, and the evaluation of student achievement. Yet in the first decades of the new millennium, several crucial issues should be maintained at the forefront while planning the future development of Israeli special education. The continuing systemic changes in Israel regarding student inclusion and resource decentralisation accentuate the importance of appropriate modifications in teacher training, student skill development, and setting design. In addition, two central future developmental trends should be considered: extending the role of the special education system and devising effective approaches for evaluating and supervising resource distribution and treatment efficacy.

Teacher training programmes

In line with the manifest inclusion policy and the aforementioned structural changes in the Israeli education system, teachers from regular and special education, require additional support and specialised training. Regular teachers who have students with special needs in their classes would benefit from guidance

support and instruction in the promotion of an accepting classroom environment. Moreover, these teachers must expand their professional knowledge about disabilities and treatment modes. Concurrently, as the actual number of students in segregated educational settings declines due to the broadening inclusion process, the professional training of special education teachers should be augmented to specifically incorporate the role of providing support and consultation for teachers in the regular system, as will be discussed below. Another important issue concerns teacher attitudes. Studies have demonstrated the major impact of teachers' and parents' attitudes on successful inclusion (Hegarty, 1993). A wide diversity of intervention programmes may promote changes in adults' perceptions and attitudes regarding disabilities, resulting in changes in instruction processes and home support (Jenkinson, 1993).

Social and adjustment skills

There is wide agreement that successful inclusion for students with special needs must involve social and adjustment aspects. Thus, teachers' knowledge on the treatment and instruction of social and adjustment skills, such as social initiation and behaviour regulation, should be promoted (Scarpati, Malloy & Fleming, 1996). Studies have indicated that social difficulties persist in partially and fully inclusive settings (Kavale & Forness, 1996). The combination of enhancing teacher awareness and designing specific social interventions might decrease the development of student behaviour problems and emotional distress.

Diverse settings

Research on the variety of special needs exhibited by children has highlighted the necessity to design a diversity of solutions (Kauffman *et al.*, 1995). In Israel, the implementation programme for the special education law emphasised the importance of the inclusive environment. Therefore, the process of designing settings for students with special needs should encompass settings with different levels of inclusion. A wider diversity of settings might offer solutions to a greater variety of student needs.

Extending the role of the special education system

The systemic changes that have evolved in regular and special education over the first half-century of Israel's existence have emphasised the need to expand and professionalise the unique role of special education teachers. The knowledge and support of the special education system may provide an important contribution to

those regular education settings that accommodate students with special needs (McLeskey, Skiba & Wilcox, 1990). Hegarty (1995) suggested that special education schools become centres that furnish services beyond solely providing intervention, such as knowledge, diagnostic evaluation, counselling to regular settings, and programme development. According to this model, the special education setting should offer knowledge and support not only to the regular education settings but also to families and to adult students with special needs. In fact, some special schools in England have shifted their role and have gradually transformed into knowledge, resource, and counseling centres (Fletcher-Campbell, 1994).

Development of evaluation and supervision processes

Research centres must be developed nationwide within academic institutions, in order to study special education resource distribution at the local level, to determine the efficacy of diverse treatments and interventions, and to draw and implement conclusions about how to optimally develop a variety of support mechanisms for the education system. In the U.S.A. and Europe, universities and research centers have significantly contributed to special education developments at the approach of the new millennium (Hasazi, Johnston, Liggett & Schattman, 1994). Similarly, two public committees were established in recent years in Israel. The first committee examined treatment effectiveness for students with learning disabilities (Margalit, 1997). A second committee is currently active in examining the implementation of the 1988 special education law. The establishment of these two public committees demonstrates the special education system's acceptance of the need to support and scrutinise the systemic changes in Israel.

In conclusion, it appears that closer collaboration between the special education and the regular education systems would take advantage of the special teachers' vast experience and knowledge base, with direct benefits for the regular teachers and, ultimately, for the students with special needs. Moreover, in order to sustain the changes in aims, roles, and structure of Israeli special education at the beginning of the new millennium, there is a need not only for collaboration between the special and regular education systems, but also for the involvement of families, communities, universities, and research centres.

Note

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PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF GREEK MOTHERS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS WHO ARE INVOLVED IN SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT CENTRES

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Abstract – *It is generally accepted that support of the family is critical for effective intervention in the case of a child with special educational needs (SEN). The quality of this support highly depends on the personality characteristics and the mental health of the parents. It has also been argued that, because of the increased pressure and the strain of having to care for a child with SEN, the opportunity to learn from and share problems with other families is very beneficial. It is also essential to seek emotional support at times of crisis through the means of parent support groups. This empirical study focuses on the mothers' personality since they are more directly affected by their child's disability. The aim of the study was to examine whether participation in parent support groups and sharing with others the care of a child with SEN affect the self-esteem, the coping mechanisms and the depression of mothers with such children.*

Introduction

*A*ntil the 1980's Special Education in Greece was not targeted towards provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the ordinary school. Since then there has been a consistent effort to include these children and cater for their needs alongside those of other children. In the years 1983-84 the Greek Ministry of Education moved away from the strategy of integration in the primary school and implemented the practice of special classes. Support is provided using the method of withdrawal of children with learning difficulties. The aims of special education as described in the Greek Law of 1985 are: (a) the effective development of children's potential and abilities; (b) their participation in the productive process, and (c) their acceptance by society. Special classes as a model of inclusion were first implemented in 1984 and from seven they have expanded to more than 700 today. According to this model the pupil is removed from his/her class to receive support from a special teacher within a group of pupils with similar problems.

Although only a limited number of studies exist who evaluate the effectiveness of the support system in Greece, some problems have been identified. Lack of specialist staff such as speech therapists, educational psychologists and physiotherapists, less than adequate provision in rural areas, no emphasis on the problems of adolescents with SEN and, finally, lack of systematic career guidance and counselling to inform pupils with SEN of routes to future employment (Polychronopoulou, 1999). Throughout the stages of special education the absence of parents as partners in their children's education is particularly evident. Apart from parents' groups formed through parental initiative (parents of children with Down syndrome, autism, and so on) the State has been less than willing to operate schemes where the parents would occupy the central role. Currently, there is a renewed interest in special education due to a new development in legislation. According to the new law, there has to be at least one centre for diagnosis and counselling in each local authority. This support must be aimed at children, parents and teachers with the aim of inclusion, early intervention and support of parents and teachers. Within the responsibilities of each centre lie guidance counselling and training for parents (either at the centre or at home) through early diagnosis and early intervention.

The study of the development and the adjustment of children with disabilities has been largely focused on the characteristics of the children themselves. This approach has ignored the family systems perspective, which takes into consideration the family's direct and indirect effects on the child's adjustment and progress. Moreover, rather than emphasising the unidirectional influence of parents on children or children on parents, child functioning is now seen more in the context of the family as a system where there is a mutual influence of family and child leading to child outcome (Martin, 1987; Hinde & Stevenson-Hinde, 1988; Halverson & Wampler, 1993). The application of a conceptual framework that emphasises the context of the family as critical among the various systems in which disabled children develop, such as the school and the community, will facilitate an understanding of disability and negate possible negative family influences on the child's development.

The closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement (Fullan, 1991). Working with parents' is a concept that has a long history in special needs education internationally. Parent partnership schemes, parent-professional relationships, home-school liaisons are terms used to describe the initiatives which have taken place in Western Europe in recent years (Wolfendale & Cook, 1997; Mittler, 1995, 2000). It is a well established professional view that appropriate education for children with special needs should start at birth with family support schemes which will enable the family to grow strong and functional and will not allow the

development of pathological conditions and/or pathological dependencies on professionals for any of its members (Carpenter, 1994).

A growing base of studies of children with disabilities exists documenting that parenting, quality of marital relationships, parental personality and whole family functioning are related to child outcome (Rutter, 1988; Powers *et al.*, 1989). This applies also to families of children with learning disabilities during middle childhood and adolescence (Mink *et al.*, 1983; Mink & Nihira, 1986). Halverson & Wampler (1993) propose that the match-mismatch model can be used in order to examine the relative importance of aspects of the family environment that moderate the direction of influence between family and child. According to this model, when disabled children are raised by problem families, both families and children will get worse over time with the direction of effects going from the disabled child to the family (child-driven model). When disabled children are raised in competent, low problem families, however, children will become less a source of problems and the families will continue to be competent over time. The direction here is from the family to the child (family-driven model).

In the Greek context, a number of studies have revealed that the central family role seems to be that of parent-child, and mainly mother-child role (Christea-Doumanis, 1978; Katakis, 1984; Makri-Botsari, 1999; Nasiakou, 1978).

Bringing up a child with learning disabilities can be particularly disruptive for the family system. (The term learning disabilities is used here to refer to children with mental retardation, mild or severe, and children with multiple physical handicaps which prevent them from reaching their education potential.) On the one hand, parents are expected to deal with the situation effectively and support their child alongside professionals. On the other hand, caring for a disabled child can be extremely demanding despite its rewards (Beresford, 1994). The specific problems associated with disabled children may adversely affect the family's adjustment and in turn decrease the levels of parental support. The effects of the disability on the family are evident in several areas such as increased cost, limited time and psychological strain. The way that parents deal with the problems related to the special needs of their child is critical for the effective support of the disabled child.

The majority of empirical evidence in this area consists of studies on the psychological well being and adjustment of the disabled child in the educational setting and, later in society. By comparison, fewer studies have been carried out investigating the effects of a child's disability on the family in terms of psychological impact and stress on the parents (Ferguson & Watt, 1980; Carr, 1985). Finally, the link between psychological aspects of parents such as self-esteem, depression and coping strategies has received considerably less attention, especially in cases where parents were involved in parental groups.

The study reported in this article investigated levels of self-esteem and depression in mothers of learning disabled children who participate in parent support groups, and the coping strategies they use in order to deal with the strain of disability. The emotional reactions and the psychological health of mothers have been traditionally investigated in the special needs literature regarding infants or very young children. Older children and adolescents have largely been ignored. Nevertheless, disabled children stay at home and continue to be cared for by parents well beyond school-age days, so it is expected that the pressure on the family is considerably higher. The review will encompass three linked areas. Firstly, the effects of the disability on the family's - especially the mother's - psychological adjustment will be presented. Secondly, the issue of parental participation in the child's education for families with a disabled child will be discussed. Then, the review will describe the different coping strategies that parents employ in order to deal with the problems they face.

Effects of disability on the family

All parents, and especially mothers, develop anticipation regarding their infant. They have plans and project their expectations into the future. As a result of the diagnosis, the parents realise that their children may not fulfill their expectations and their 'life plan' can be irrevocably changed (Robin & Josse, 1986).

The effects on the family of bringing up a child with a developmental disability such as autism or Down syndrome can often be overwhelming. The exceptional pressures that parents and the whole family system face start very early from the birth or the time of diagnosis (if these are different) of the child with disabilities. The birth of a child with disabilities or a high-risk child is a stressful event that often leads the mother to inadequate coping styles, difficulties in relationships and reduced social contact (Brooks-Gun & Lewis, 1982). The adaptation process that parents go through following the diagnosis of learning disabilities in one of their children is long and difficult and has often been compared to a bereavement process (Hornby, 1994; Miller *et al.*, 1994; Gath, 1985). The key difference is that the child with learning disabilities continues to live with the family and the parents continue to provide care for him/her. The parental stages of adaptation to the diagnosis of learning disability consist of shock, denial, anger, sadness, detachment, reorganisation and adaptation (in order of occurrence). Given time and support parents and other family members will progress from the initial stages of shock and denial to the adaptation to their child's disability (Manthorpe, 1995). However, it has been argued that not everyone progresses at the same pace and there are people who often regress at a previous stage or different members of the

family may be at different stages of adapting at any given time (McCormack, 1992).

The effects of disability on the family have been documented through empirical studies comparing families with a disabled child to families with healthy children, and through qualitative studies where parents - in most cases mothers - discussed their feelings and problems. Problems refer specifically to anxiety and stress, marital adjustment and family cohesion in general, depression and low levels of confidence as well as maladaptive coping styles.

Parental stress can also be linked with the presence of a disability in the family. This relates to the limited time and the social restriction described above. Research has been conducted with children with Down syndrome and children with autism where the effects on parents - usually mothers - were contrasted with families with healthy children. Results indicated that families in the first situation reported more problems (Sanders & Morgan, 1997; Cuskelly *et al.*, 1998).

High levels of parental stress and psychological ill-health are known to lead to decreased interaction between the parent and the child and as a result less support for the child (Field, 1980; Lewis & Sullivan, 1996). Since engaging in high levels of interaction and actively participating in the education of the disabled child is highly correlated with the child's progress, the latter is irrevocably damaged.

A great body of research has further indicated that maternal depressive mood state, even in non-clinical samples, may be a contributing factor to problems in children's functioning and adjustment across a wide variety of domains. This includes pro-social, cognitive, internalising and externalising behaviour (Forehand & McCombs, 1988; Gelfand & Teti, 1990; Silverberg *et al.*, 1996).

The bulk of evidence converged to suggest that living with a disabled child causes a great deal of problems both for the family as a system, its members separately, and their interaction. However, certain findings presented a reverse picture. Specifically, in some studies, mothers of severely disadvantaged children did not necessarily report greater levels of stress than those of 'normal' children (Holroyd & McArthur, 1976; Bradshaw, 1980; Carr *et al.*, 1983) or indeed in others a positive impact of children with an intellectual disability on the family was reported (Stainton & Besser, 1998).

Coping strategies

In the 1990's a shift was observed from a pathological model of disability to an emphasis on employing 'coping strategies' (Russell, 1994). Families differ greatly in their reactions, coping styles and resources. According to McConachie

(1994), the coping styles of families differ in that different families can perceive the challenges they face in a different way.

Many factors were identified as assisting family adaptation to a child with a disability. Some of them are the early provision of information by the professionals, the quality of relationships with the professionals and the involvement of parents in decisions about their child (Grant *et al*, 1998; Barr, 1997; McCormack, 1992).

Visits by a trained professional ('home visitor') provide parents with support and encourage them to lead ordinary lives and develop relationships with the local community (Cunningham & Davis, 1985). Parents who were provided with support at the initial stages following the diagnosis seemed to be more confident and optimistic and had higher expectations for their children (Cunningham & Davis, 1985) than those who did not receive similar support.

The stages that parents typically go through when their child is identified with a disability have been described above. After the initial shock and disbelief, comes anger, sadness and finally parents begin to enter the coping stage. According to the theory of coping, there are three coping dimensions: task-oriented, emotion oriented and avoidance oriented (Endler & Parker, 1990a, 1990b). Task-oriented coping is defined as active, problem oriented efforts to change the situation or the problem. Emotion-oriented coping is the tendency to focus on negative affective reactions. Finally, avoidance-oriented coping is defined as a reluctance to confront a stressful situation. This is subdivided in two sub-scales, distraction and social diversion. The second and the third coping style are considered maladaptive since they do not help the individual address the problematic situation effectively. The emotion-oriented coping style carries for the individual a tendency to be highly self-focused and engaged in excessive self-blame and wish fulfillment. Individuals who use this type of coping experience their emotions with great intensity and often feel unable to regulate their negative emotions. As a result, there is a greater likelihood that they present depressive symptoms in conjunction with negative cognitive operations, self-consciousness and dysfunctional attitudes (Billing & Moos, 1984; Folkman *et al.*, 1986). Finally, people who are more negative about regulating their negative mood have a tendency to avoid rather than approach problems (Catanzaro & Greenwood, 1994).

The life stress that parents, and especially mothers, of children with disabilities face has already been discussed. Feelings of disappointment and distorted cognitive mechanisms prevent them from functioning normally and can often be linked to low self-esteem and depression (Patterson, 1992; Beresford, 1995). Counselling of families suffering from the stress of having disabled children indicate that a focus on parental attributions may have the best chance of altering the family dynamics. Typically these programmes consist of discussions with

parents aimed at dealing with the cognitive attributional style of parents. It is common for parents to refuse to face the reality of their child's problem and to cope with anxiety and guilt by denying the presence of the disability. Moreover, levels of guilt and self-blame are high. Counselling helps reduce self-blame and guilt in parents. It also helps reduce depression and restructure negative attributions (Nixon & Singer, 1993).

Participating in parent support groups can act as an effective coping strategy for the problems that parents face due to their child's disability. It is assumed that through parent groups and with the support of trained professionals parents become better equipped to help their child and cope with their own difficulties. Moreover, it has been established that coping variables can emerge as significant predictors of maternal and paternal involvement as well as a mediator variable between family functioning and parental involvement.

Parent support groups

Throughout Europe and the USA it is the disability associations (MENCAP, The National Autistic Society) and the community who run parent groups. These involve parental meetings with professionals at varying intervals (from weekly to monthly) in a variety of settings (such as hospitals, universities and schools). The models have been described elsewhere (Callias, 1980). Parents are taught to assess their children, identify problems and set targets. They are also taught principles of behaviour modification. When at home, they work towards specific objectives and report on their children's progress at the next meeting. The aim is to include both parents but in practice mothers usually constitute the majority in these groups. Attendance in parental groups is reported between 72 and 82 per cent (Holland and Hattersley, 1980; Firth, 1982).

Family support is conceptualised from a social model of disability involving a consideration of the wider context in which the families live. There is a wide variety of schemes aimed at supporting parents and families of people with disabilities (Mittler & Mittler, 1994).

Through participation in support groups, it is expected that parents (a) systematically learn new behavioural methods from trained professionals; (b) release some of the pressure that they experience by sharing their feelings with others in a similar position and, (c) exchange information about their children.

Participation in parent groups can be evaluated through the use of questionnaires circulated to parents after the end of the training. Respondents are usually very positive, mainly emphasising that the approach has helped them to see their child in a more positive light, and to be more objective and constructive.

In addition, it has enabled them to feel more confident and to cope with the problems associated with learning disabilities (Holland & Hattersley, 1980; Firth, 1982). Many family support initiatives address the lack of resources in families of children with special needs necessary to cope with the increased stress they face from day to day. In terms of the effect of family support programmes on family stress, some evidence exists showing increased factual knowledge about the disability, increased knowledge about stress and stress management but no reduction in overall stress (Peck, 1998).

Given the different criteria used to assess the success of the programmes it is often difficult to reach a conclusion. Perhaps parents are grateful for any type of help provided and do not assess the effectiveness of the programmes with objective criteria such as skills' improvement in their children.

According to Carr (1985) some drawbacks of parent groups may be summarised as follows:

1. The importance of including both parents in the teaching sessions is emphasised but almost all projects had difficulty in including the fathers.
2. Difficulties are highlighted when the children of the parents present diverse problems, abilities and are of different age. It was argued that parents of the younger and the more able children benefited more. Those with children who present more difficulties feel discouraged and embarrassed and may be unwilling to attend further meetings.
3. Other problems arise when the new skills parents learn bring them in conflict with other professionals (i.e. teachers) who may not be aware of such new methods.

From this review it emerged that children cared for at home constitute a demanding situation for parents and especially for mothers who are the primary carers. Within a transactional model the difficulties of the children can adversely affect the parents' and especially the mothers' mental health, increase stress, lower self-esteem and increase levels of depression. As a result, the study of family variables has become increasingly critical in understanding outcomes typically considered programme driven. The coping styles that mothers use are often maladaptive and, given that the child stays and continues to receive care in the family long after the normal school years, it becomes increasingly difficult for mothers to redress the balance. The problems faced are often aggravated if no support is provided. One could expect that in a normal family less care is needed when the child becomes an adolescent and is prepared for employment. The opposite stands true for families with a disabled child.

Identification of the problems the mothers face is needed in order to provide appropriate support through formal and informal services. Only then will it be possible to enable families to adjust to disability. Given that a number of problems have been associated with mothers of disabled children, this study investigated the self-esteem, depression and coping strategies of a sample of mothers who participated in parental support groups.

Method

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 69 mothers of children with special needs selected from two Special Needs Centres in Greece. The centres catered for children from 5 to 18 years with developmental disabilities (autism, Asperger syndrome), mild learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties with mobility problems. Both centres were running parent groups where, under the guidance of a psychologist and a social worker (for the first and second centre respectively) parents met weekly in groups of 4 to 8 to discuss matters of their children's progress and to learn techniques in order to cope with their children's disability. The mothers were aged 45-55 years and had on average two children with the second child having the disability. The majority were unemployed because of the disability of their child. Although the aim of the study was to include both parents, that proved impossible. It was mainly the mothers who participated in the groups. With the permission of the centres' directors, the mothers were approached, informed about the scope of the investigation and agreed to meet at a time convenient to them. The questionnaires were filled in individually by the mothers and were returned to the centre at the following parent meeting.

Measuring instruments

(a) Self-esteem: *Self-esteem* was assessed using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Each of the ten items in this instrument is intended to measure global self-esteem in the way described by Rosenberg. The respondent is asked to rate each statement from 1 to 4 (e.g. Generally, I am satisfied with myself). High scoring implies high self-esteem while low scoring implies low self-esteem.

For Rosenberg, when a person is characterised as having high self-esteem, this implies that s/he has self-respect and considers him/herself a person of worth. Rosenberg claimed that we should acknowledge the individual's general sense of

self-worth in addition to one's self-perceptions across the specific domains of one's life. Rosenberg has argued that, in all likelihood, the various discrete elements of the self are weighted, hierarchised and combined according to an extremely complex equation of which the individual is probably unaware. Accordingly, he has taken the direct approach to item writing, assuming that each individual, in developing his or her self-esteem, has consciously and/or unconsciously taken into account and weighted a unique set of varying personal attributes.

(b) Depression: For the assessment of the *depression* of the mothers of the sample we used the Depression subscale of Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire GHQ28 (Goldberg & Williams, 1988), as adapted for use with a Greek population by Moudzoukis *et al.* (1990). This questionnaire is widely used for the identification of the mild forms of psychopathology in the general population. It consists of 28 questions investigating the general mental and psychosomatic state of the individuals in the weeks previous to the questionnaire. It focuses on two important categories of psychological states: (a) the person's inability to continue his/her normal way of living and (b) the onset of factors that are responsible for the problems.

Apart from the overall scoring, the questionnaire provides individual scoring and information on four sub-scales: psychosomatic symptoms, stress and insomnia, social malfunctioning and depression. The respondent is asked to pinpoint whether s/he has a symptom or behaviour (e.g. Do you feel that you are always under pressure?) over the previous weeks and to what degree: 'never', 'no more than usual', 'a little more than usual or 'a lot more than usual'.

(c) Coping: To assess the *coping strategies* used by the sample of the study we employed the coping measure of Folkman and Lazarus (1980), as adapted for use with a Greek population by Besevegis and Karadimas (1997). This questionnaire assesses 5 types of coping strategies used by individuals to deal with a stressful problem.

The five types of coping strategies are:
- Positive approach: this strategy involves attempts of the individual to reassess the stressful situation in a positive way (e.g. 'I tried to see the positive side of the situation').
- Search for social support: this scale involves items that refer to the individual looking for support in his/her social surroundings in order to deal with these problems (e.g. 'I talked to someone to help me comprehend my situation better').

- Wishful thinking/dreaming: this strategy consists of items that assess the tendency of the individual to overcome problems by wishing for a miracle or dreaming of how the situation would be if something like that hadn't happenned (e.g. 'I wish this situation would disappear').
- Avoidance: this subscale assesses the individual's tendency to re-evaluate the situation by minimising or ignoring its true importance (e.g. 'I tried to forget by working or being involved with something else').
- Assertive handling of the problem: this subscale assesses the individual's effort to find a solution by dealing directly and assertively with the situation or the person who is perhaps responsible for it (e.g. 'I expressed my anger to the person who was responsible for the problem').

Results

In Table 1 the numbers of mothers are presented by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing with others the care of the child with special needs.

TABLE 1: *Number of mothers by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others*

Participation in organised support groups	Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs		Total
	No	Yes	
No	33	12	45
Yes	15	9	24
Total	48	21	69

As Table 1 shows, the majority of mothers did not participate in parent groups in the centres of the sample.

Self-esteem

The mean scores and standard deviations of the mothers' *self-esteem* by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Self-esteem mean scores and standard deviations by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others

Participation in organised support groups	Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs				Total	
	No		Yes			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
No	2.66	.22	3.02	.30	2.76	.28
Yes	2.87	.43	3.31	.35	3.04	.45
Total	2.73	.31	3.14	.35	2.86	.37

Table 2 shows that the self-esteem mean scores are above the midpoint of the scale ($\bar{X}$=2.86>2.50). However, there are differences associated with both level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing with others the care of the child with special needs.

The results of the two-way ANOVA of the self-esteem scores are presented in Table 3. The eta statistic, whose squared value indicates the proportion of variance explained by each factor and the interaction term, was used as index of the effect sizes. The proportion of variance in the dependent variable accounted for by level of participation in organised support groups, level of sharing with others the care of the child with special needs and their interaction, the adjusted R^2, was used as index of the model goodness-of-fit.

TABLE 3: Two-way ANOVA of the mothers' self-esteem scores by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others

Effects	F	p	eta^2 (%)
Main effect			
Sharing with others the care of the child	23.128	.000	26.2
Participation in organised support groups	9.399	.003	12.6
Interaction	.266	.608	.4

According to Table 2, the mothers' self-esteem was lower both when mothers did not participate in organised support groups and when they were not sharing the care of their child with others ($\overline{X}=2.66$). The self-esteem appeared higher when mothers had both types of help available ($\overline{X}=3.31$). The ANOVA revealed highly significant main effects for both the independent variables of sharing [$F(1,65)=23.128$, p<.001] and participation [$F(1,65)=9.399$, p.<.003], but no interaction effects.

The proportion of variance in the self-esteem scores explained by sharing with others the care of the child with special needs was $eta^2 = 26.2\%$, while the respective proportion for participating in organised support groups was $eta^2=12.6\%$. Thus, it appears that sharing with others the care of the child with special needs has a stronger effect on mother's self-esteem than her participation in organised support groups. The total variance in the self-esteem scores explained by the differences in the levels of participating in organised support groups and sharing with others the care of the child with special needs, the adjusted R^2, was 33.1%.

These additive and very systematic effects are also evident in the profile plot (Figure 1) of the means in Table 2. These findings imply that both variables combine to produce a mother's level of self-esteem and that one does not offset or compensate for the other.

FIGURE 1: Mother's self-esteem as a function of levels of participating in organized support groups and sharing with others the care of her child with special needs

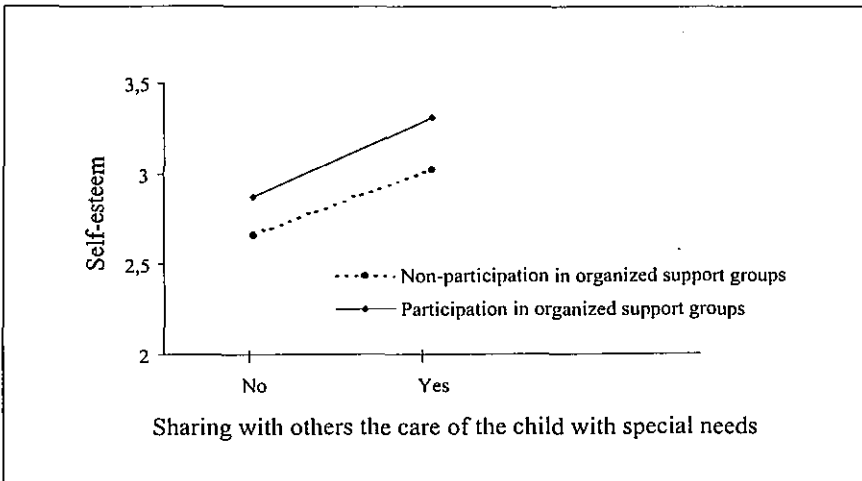Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs

Figure 1 also illustrates that the mothers with the highest self-esteem were those who both participated in organised support groups and shared with others the care of their child. These are the mothers scoring in the $\overline{X}=3.31$ range on self-esteem. The mothers with the lowest self-esteem are those who displayed the opposite pattern, non-participation in organised support groups coupled with non-sharing with others the care of her child with special needs. These are the mothers scoring in the $\overline{X}=2.66$ range on self-esteem. The difference between these two groups is marked, indicating the impact that both these predictors have on the mothers' self-esteem.

Depression

In Table 4 mothers' *depression* mean scores and standard deviations are presented by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing with others the care of the child with special needs.

TABLE 4: Depression mean scores and standard deviations by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others

Participation in organised support groups	Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs				Total	
	No		Yes			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
No	10.49	3.45	4.83	4.95	8.98	4.60
Yes	5.53	2.53	2.33	1.12	4.33	2.62
Total	8.94	3.93	3.76	3.95	7.36	4.58

On the whole, depression levels were average. Taking into account that 12 is a cut-off score for a diagnosis of depression, it can be said that the sample was not expected to be clinically depressed, however they did present some depressive symptoms. In terms of the two independent variables, participation in organised support groups and sharing the care of the SEN child with others have a positive effect in the mothers' level of depression. Depression levels were lower for those mothers who received help at home for their child and participated in support groups ($\overline{X}=2.33$). Higher depression levels were observed for mothers who did not have any of this support ($\overline{X}=10.49$).

These effects are also evident in the results of the two-way ANOVA of the depression scores by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing with others the care of the child with special needs, presented in Table 5. Main effects were found for both independent variables [participation in support groups: $F(1,65) = 16.477$, p.<.001, sharing with others the care of the child with special needs: $F(1,65) = 23.250$, p.<.001], but no interaction effects were detected.

TABLE 5: Two-way ANOVA of the depression scores by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others

Effects	F	p	eta^2 (%)
Main effect			
Sharing with others the care of the child	23.250	.000	26.3
Participation in organised support groups	16.477	.000	20.2
Interaction	1.783	.186	2.7

The total variance in the depression scores explained by the differences in the levels of participating in organised support groups and sharing the care of the SEN child with others, the adjusted R^2, was 47.4%.

Coping mechanisms

Tables 6-10 present the mean frequencies and standard deviations of the five types of coping mechanisms examined in the study by level of participating in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others.

The mothers who received counselling and had some help for their child were more likely to use the positive approach type of coping ($\overline{X}$=27.44) whilst those who had neither of these types of support were the least likely to be positive about their situation ($\overline{X}$=22.76).

Table 7 shows that higher means for search for social support were achieved by the mothers who shared their care of their child with others but did not receive any counselling ($\overline{X}$=13.33) and the lowest means were achieved by those who participated in support groups but did not share their care of their child with others in the family ($\overline{X}$=11.00).

TABLE 6: Mean frequencies and standard deviations of the positive approach coping mechanism by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others

Participation in organised support groups	Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs				Total	
	No		Yes			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
No	22.76	2.97	26.00	3.57	23.62	3.02
Yes	22.93	4.61	27.44	3.24	24.63	4.64
Total	22.82	3.15	26.62	3.43	23.97	3.66

TABLE 7: Mean frequencies and standard deviations of the search for social support coping mechanism by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others

Participation in organised support groups	Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs				Total	
	No		Yes			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
No	11.94	1.62	13.33	1.67	12.31	1.73
Yes	11.00	3.16	12.56	4.13	11.58	3.55
Total	11.65	2.23	13.00	2.92	12.06	2.51

As Table 8 shows, there were no particular differences in wishing coping strategy in terms of counselling and support group participation. It is interesting to note that the group which least used this strategy, in other words wishing that the problems would disappear, were those who had both types of support.

Table 9 shows that the second negative coping strategy, i.e. avoidance, was most frequently used by those mothers who had both types of support.

The mothers who received help for their situation both through counselling and sharing the care of their child were those who were equipped to deal more assertively with the situation ($\overline{X}$=8.67). No participation in parent groups resulted in the lowest scoring for those who had someone to help them for the care of their child ($\overline{X}$=5.83).

TABLE 8: Mean frequencies and standard deviations of the wishful thinking coping mechanism by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others

Participation in organised support groups	Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs				Total	
	No		Yes			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
No	16.21	2.30	16.42	3.34	16.27	2.58
Yes	16.27	3.37	16.11	3.65	16.21	3.40
Total	16.23	2.64	16.29	3.93	16.25	2.87

TABLE 9: Mean frequencies and standard deviations of the avoidance coping mechanism by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others

Participation in organised support groups	Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs				Total	
	No		Yes			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
No	17.58	2.56	15.25	3.74	16.96	3.06
Yes	16.13	2.64	19.78	5.59	17.50	4.28
Total	17.12	2.65	17.19	5.02	17.14	3.51

Table 11 presents the results of the two-way ANOVAs for the mean scores of the coping strategies.

It can be seen that sharing with others the care of the child with special needs has a significant main effect on two out of the five coping mechanisms examined here: positive approach [F $(1,65)=19.456$, p.<.001] and search for social support [F$(1,65)= 4,966$, p<.05]. This finding implies that when mothers received some kind of help in the caring of their child they were more likely to use a positive approach in order to cope with their stressful situation and also look for support in their social settings. No significant differences in their coping strategies were found in terms of their participation in organised support groups. Moreover, an interaction effect (sharing x participation) was found for the dependent variables

TABLE 10: *Mean frequencies and standard deviations of the assertive solution of problem coping mechanism by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others*

Participation in organised support groups	Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs				Total	
	No		Yes			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
No	8.33	1.47	5.83	2.48	7.67	2.09
Yes	6.60	2.78	8.67	2.12	7.38	2.70
Total	7.79	2.10	7.02	2.69	7.56	2.30

TABLE 11: *Two-way ANOVAs of the frequencies of the coping mechanisms by level of participation in organised support groups and level of sharing the care of the SEN child with others*

Coping mechanism	Main effects						Interaction		
	Sharing with others the care of the child with special needs			Participation in organised support groups					
	F	p	eta^2%	F	p	eta^2%	F	p	eta^2%
Positive approach	19.456	.000	23.0	.850	.360	1.3	.521	.473	.8
Search for social support	4.996	.029	7.1	1.683	.199	2.5	.015	.903	.0
Wishful Thinking	.001	.975	.0	.025	.874	.0	.052	.821	.1
Avoidance	.545	.463	.8	2.984	.089	4.4	11.172	.001	14.7
Assertive Solution	.149	.701	.2	.962	.330	1.5	16.577	.000	20.3

of avoidance [$F(1,65)=11.172$, $p<.001$] and assertive solution of the problem [$F(1,65)=16.577$, $p.<001$].

Discussion

In the present study mothers of children with special needs presented above average self-esteem. This is an important finding especially if the differences between the groups of the study are taken into account. It is evident that when both

types of support, counselling and help with the care of the child, take place simultaneously they enhance the self-esteem of the mothers. The demands of having a disabled child in the family are significantly reduced when mothers share the pressure of caring for their child throughout the day with another person. As supported in the literature, one of the most important consequences of having a disabled child in the family is the constant responsibility and the overwhelming amount of time devoted to his/her care (Dupont, 1980; Brooks-Gun & Lewis, 1982; Russell, 1994). Lack of - or small steps of - improvement can lead to anxiety and reduced social contact. Self-esteem has been known to be affected from these factors. Mothers who had the opportunity to be involved in a group with other parents in a similar situation and received the help of someone for the care of their child seemed to report higher levels of self-esteem.

Depression may be an additional factor linked to the parents' feelings of anxiety and stress about the current situation as well as the future of the disabled child. Coupled with the mothers' limited time and inability of employment due to restricted hours, this can often lead to a negative self-image, general ill-health and even depression. Mothers in the present study reported on average moderate levels of depression. Although they were not expected to compose a clinically depressed sample they did present certain depressive symptoms. Increased stresses and the strains of care may have resulted in this. The hypothesis that participation in organised parent groups and sharing the care of the child can alleviate a degree of stress that the mothers feel was confirmed in this study, since the group who received this type of help was found to respond better and to present lower levels of depression.

Finally, we examined the frequency in which mothers used both positive and negative types of coping strategies in order to deal with their problems. The findings showed that mothers who were involved in organised social interaction with parents with similar problems and had the opportunity to devote time on matters other than their children's care while someone else in the family looked after the child, employed positive coping techniques more frequently. For example they were involved in positive thinking, were looking for social support and were able to act on the source of stress. It has to be stressed that the way parents react to the stressful situation - whether for example they are task oriented (positive style) or emotion oriented (maladaptive)-, and the way they perceive the challenges they face, is linked with the child's physical and emotional well-being (Fehrenbach & Peterson, 1989). This study has illustrated that there were significant differences in terms of coping styles between the group who received some help and the group who had no help. The tendency to confront the stressful situation directly, by being focused on the problem and not being engaged in excessive self-blame and wish fulfillment enables the individual to regulate

negative emotions, engage in positive cognitive thinking, present fewer negative symptoms and finally hold more positive attitudes (Billing & Moos, 1984; Folkman *et al.*, 1986; Greenwood, 1994).

A number of studies in the UK have also indicated the pressures that parents face due to the needs of their disabled children. Limited time and social restriction is a constraint, since most children with disabilities cannot be left alone for more than a few minutes during the day (Russell, 1994). Dupond (1980) found that in a population sample of thirty-nine learning disabled children, families were spending an average of seven hours in the care and training of the children. In an early study, Wilkin (1979) revealed that there was little help from relatives, friends or neighbours for the day-to-day care of the severely disabled child. As a result there was lack of social support network. That is aggravated when there is evidence of poor housing, low income and one parent families. Social restriction is intensified when the child is cared for at home rather than in a special centre.

An additional factor that may cause high levels of anxiety for parents is home intervention. Studies have shown that the quality of parental participation in their child's education in addition to or in conjunction with the professionals - especially in cases of disability - facilitates and balances the work of the professionals and also reinforces a positive image for the disabled individual. However, parents are expected to find the time to work with their special children in a way that is not expected for their ordinary children (Buckley, 1994). This can be a cause of anxiety for some of them, especially if they have other siblings to care for and their time is limited. This is consistent with the findings of this study which indicated that relieving the mother from the care of her child for some hours every day reduces depression and increases self-esteem.

Despite their supportive role, parent support groups have been faced with negative feelings from the parents. For mothers, the combination of different roles such as therapist and teacher to their disabled child and wife and mother to their other children may prevent them from being themselves, and can often lead to psychopathology (Carr, 1985). The question is whether a small improvement in the child outweighs the psychological cost to the family. Another stressor associated with parental involvement is that parents often feel that they are looked down by professionals, that their efforts are undervalued and their needs are not recognised (Berry *et al* 1981; Gascoigne, 1996). The pressure of the professionals to involve the parents in the education of their children may turn out to be in conflict with the interests of the rest of the family. The need arises to help parents in a way that is acceptable to them, because efforts may be wasted otherwise. This study has indicated the positive effect of

the parent groups on the mothers' self esteem, depression levels and coping strategies but also found that the most significant variable was support from someone at home. A more in-depth investigation of the support mothers received at the centres would reveal more interesting information.

Another significant finding which has many implications for research in this area is the increasing responsibilities taken on by mothers. They are expected to have the main and sometimes the sole responsibility for the child with disabilities. Caring tends to be perceived as the mothers' primary responsibility. This pattern is reinforced by the 'male incompetence' myth (Blain, 1994) which argues that men are less able to provide care, and excuses them from learning the necessary skills. Studies have shown that mothers are unsupported by other members of the family. Moreover, even in cases where other members of the family contributed to domestic tasks, the disabled child was considered the responsibility of the mother. This 'burden' of caring on the mother's shoulders is aggravated when SEN services concentrate on mother and child and indirectly ignore the father's contribution. The absence of fathers from the support groups was noted in this study as well. Perhaps more emphasis should be given on the significance of including them in the helping process.

Traditionally, mothers have been the main focus of family research either by providing information for their children with disabilities or by discussing the effects of the disability on their personality and behaviour. The main body of research on the area of interaction between parents and children with learning disabilities focuses on mother-child interaction.

Less attention has been given to fathers, mainly due to the difficulty in access and co-operation that was reported in many studies. Findings suggest that those fathers who had supportive parents themselves were more likely to have positive feelings and do more with their child (Waisbren, 1980). In another early study, where fathers of children with learning disabilities were compared with fathers of healthy children, the former presented higher levels of depression, less enjoyment of both their disabled child and their other children, lower self-esteem and a sense of paternal incompetence and 'a pattern of neurotic-like constriction' expressed in increased levels of stress' (Cummings, 1976).

An intervening variable that may redress the balance between the lowered self-esteem and the high levels of stress is the mother's employment. Research indicates that women's employment - if desired - is correlated with a positive self-image and feelings of worthiness (Martin & Roberts, 1984). Mothers who were employed in a paid job had fewer psychological problems than those who wanted to work and did not (Bradshaw, 1980). However, caring for a disabled child decreases maternal employment rates since the number of hours that is possible for a mother to work are restricted (Smyth & Robus, 1989). Moreover, mothers

of children with disabilities do not increase their working hours as their children grow up (Baldwin, 1985). Findings from a study by Beresford (1994) suggest that employment rates of parents of disabled children are lower than in the general population.

The majority of the mothers in this sample were unemployed. Although the reasons why this occurred were not investigated, it is evident that lack of opportunity to work can result in extreme personal and financial hardship (Glendenning, 1992). Parents are exposed to increased risk of stress and symptoms such as depression. Employment can offer mothers, and parents in general, an opportunity to escape monotonous household routine and make them move away from their image as parents of disabled children (Beresford, 1994). It has also been found that employment can reduce the levels of stress, ill health and depression among mothers of children with disabilities (Bradshaw & Lawton, 1978; Sloper & Turner, 1993; Sloper et al., 1991) and lead to self-fulfillment (Lewis et al., 1996). It is important to emphasise though that the beneficial effects of mother's employment were only important in cases where the mothers were satisfied with their employment status (Bradshaw & Luton, 1978).

We conclude that the stress anyone involved in the day-to-day care of a learning disabled child, experiences can often be overwhelming. Caring for children with severe impairments often implies help with self-care (toileting, washing, dressing, feeding, watching over) lasting longer than their non-disabled peers. Other special needs may involve special dieting, medication, and physiotherapy. Given these sources of additional stress it is not surprising that the literature has shown increased levels of mental and physical health problems among parents of disabled children (Beresford, 1996).

It has been shown that group counselling programmes aiming at dealing with the cognitive attributional style of parents and increasing the social contacts among parents who face similar stressful situations at home, can help alleviate some of this stress. They can also raise self-esteem, reduce depressive symptoms and help parents learn to use positive coping techniques. In addition, receiving help with the care of their children can lift considerable weight off the shoulders of the mothers who are traditionally the main carers. It can also enable them to be involved in social interactions, or engage in part-time employment which in turn improves their self-image (Martin & Roberts, 1984; Beresford, 1994).

Since one of the findings of this study has been that sharing the care of the child at home leads to improved self-esteem, lower levels of depression and more positive coping strategies, this has certain implications for policy and practice for the provision of special needs support in Greece. An extensive

development of support services for families with disabled children has to take place in order to provide a framework through which parents can use the coping strategies they find most helpful. As described in the literature, there is currently a lack of organised early intervention programmes that involve both parents and children. To be effective, intervention should start early and should address the child, the family, as well as the social environment (De Moor *et al.*, 1995). Parents should be helped to deal with feelings of stress, develop an emotional bond with their child and receive information about professionals and types of programmes that are running in their area. This type of support is almost non-existent in Greece or in very early stages of development and that mainly in urban areas.

According to the stress model developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) the coping process mediates the effects of stress on an individual's well-being. Given that support needs for parents and children are inextricably linked, services have to be made available that focus not only on the child but on the mother as well. Lessening the care burden would allow more quality time between parent and child and child-care provision would allow the mother to return to work and feel less isolated and unsupported.

Finally, counselling services should focus on individual ways of coping with the stress of having a disabled child in the family and seek to build on mothers' strengths as well as their preferred ways of coping. Further research should investigate the personal experiences of parents from specialist provision and identify their needs. It should not be forgotten that although the pathological model which many professionals have of parents remains strong (i.e. the need for families to accept and come to terms with their disability) it should not be used as a straightjacket to be applied to all families. These ideas should not distract from the uniqueness of each family and their need for emotional, social and practical support (Mittler, 1995).

Moreover, both mothers and fathers should be included in the support schemes. When professionals organise to meet with parents in their territory (clinics, hospitals and schools) rather than at home, this means that mothers are the ones who are able to come to meetings. This is inconsistent with the ecological model of development which is widely taught but not often implemented. In order to involve fathers in the education and training of their children, more flexibility is needed in the hours worked by professionals and in seeing parents at home rather than office hours (Mittler, 1995). After all, it is the needs of both parents that have to be primarily addressed in these types of programmes since they are the ones who are involved in the care of their children in the long term. All such interventions should ideally involve the whole family and not only the mothers.

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CYPRUS: SPECIAL EDUCATION AND HOME SCHOOL 'PARTNERSHIP'

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Abstract – *Using a case study approach, the paper attempts to draw a picture of the educational turmoils faced by a child with special needs in Cyprus at the end of the 20th century. The case study focuses on a 'failure' of the system rather than a 'success story' in an effort to highlight the problems faced by children, parents and professionals in a situation where the State does not provide adequate support for the needs of children like Chris and his family. Assumptions about existing 'partnership' schemes between home and school are challenged in the process, and issues of the unequal power relationship between parents and professionals are raised. All this is placed against a background sketching the development of compulsory education, in an attempt to probe questions about how children of all abilities and all kinds of background came to attend school and how their parents found themselves obliged to 'co-operate' with the school.*

Introduction

*I*n 1999 the Cypriot State celebrated 70 years of special education in Cyprus in a rather appropriate way: it introduced a brand new legislation legitimising – at last – general school attendance for children with special needs as the main educational policy for such children (CME&C, 1999). In practice, this was nothing new. Integration practices had been operating on the island since the 80's, but the legislative framework has – for a number of reasons – taken some years to materialise (Phtiaka, 2000). From 1929 we have come a very long way in a very short space of time: from the establishment of the School for the Blind, to official integration of all children with special needs in the general school; from colonial rule, to self administration; from a multinational community to a country divided by occupation; from segregationist institutions run by select Boards of Governors, to a State educational policy; from a charity discourse to an educational discourse; from a philanthropic model to a human rights one (Phtiaka, 2001).

Needless to say, such a multitude of changes cannot easily be digested in such a short time (Phtiaka, 2000). Changes in Cypriot special education have often been in rhetoric rather than in policy and practice. Foreign ideas have on occasion been copied rather than national needs assessed. Terminology has changed from special needs, to integration, to inclusion without adequate understanding, and policy has

moved fast from complete segregation to majority integration (inclusion is still a dream of the future) without the necessary support.

We are facing the 21st century with hope, anticipation and fear all mingled up as the Regulations supporting the new legislation have passed through Parliament, and September 2001 will bring the first official State attempt to implement a legally backed up integration. Parental groups who fought for a number of years to take the Law through Parliament are eagerly watching, and a State apparently able and willing is put to the test: Will it all come together this Autumn, two years after the passing of the new law (1999), forty-one years after the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus (1960), twenty-seven years after the Turkish invasion (1974) and a whole 2000 years after the establishment of a religion that claims equality for all? Is the education system ready to host? Is the State ready to support? Is social opinion ready to accept? Are we ready to embrace the right of children with special needs to be educated alongside their peers? Are schools and parents ready to work in partnership to the advantage of the children?

A paper of the future will have to answer these questions and evaluate whether we were indeed ready or not. Only the past and present are open to us now for critical appraisal. We can take stock and learn from our mistakes, making sure that we shall never repeat them. A story of a series of such mistakes follows, in an attempt to exorcise the past and to inform the future. It is a story of a home-school relationship that did not exist and the consequences this had for the boy trapped between the two.

Compulsory education and home-school partnership

The international scene

In the light of a growing international interest in parental involvement in education (Cairney *et al.*, 1995; Davis, 1991; Deem & Brehony, 1993; Epstein, 1992; Macbeath & Turner, 1990; Merttens *et al.*, 1993; Phtiaka, 1996a; 1998; Vella *et al*, 1997), and the education of children with special needs in particular (Phtiaka, 1997b; 1997c; Riddell & Brown, 1994; Riddell, Brown & Duffield, 1994; Vincent & Evans, 1997; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997) research in the area (Toomey, 1996; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997) has indicated that relationships between home and school have always been a controversial issue. Inevitably presented from the perspective of the school in the past (Phtiaka, 1996a), these relationships have not always been seen as being of the desired standard, intensity or appropriate quality. In fact, if we go far enough in history, we shall meet home and school as open competitors for the child's time and potential. This is

particularly true in the developed industrial societies of the West, as a quick comparison can indicate that such state control is not yet exercised in many developing countries. With regard to the UK, which can be used here as a case in point, Carlen *et al.* (1992) state:

'Compulsory school attendance by law has (...) always been of historical interest for the ways in which the state secured economic access to the family, principally by protecting children from economic exploitation by their parents. In this respect nineteenth-century education and factory legislation were significant in altering the traditional 'property rights' of parents over their children, in favour of closer state surveillance, monitoring and control.' (Carlen *et al.*, 1992, p. 20)

Evidently, the conflict of interests between home and school was so apparent in the early days of compulsory education, that legislation, as well as ideology, were used in order to force parents to part company with their children and send them to school. Indeed for this to be achieved 'parents (...) had to conform to certain standards of child- rearing practice which could be inspected, and were held accountable if need be in law' (Carlen *et al.*, 1992, p. 21). It is very important to clarify here that these were not randomly chosen standards. They were mainly middle class standards aimed mostly at working class families in an effort to control and shape them to the market's needs. If Connell (quoted in Cairney & Ruge, 1996) is correct in stating that there is an in-built class history within school curricula which privileges the 'ruling class' over the 'working class' (Cairney & Ruge 1996, p. 104), then we should expect problems in the development of home-school relationships and in parental response to school.

In their analysis Carlen *et al.* (1992) indicate that change of working class practices towards school could not be achieved by legislation alone and without some form or degree of parental consent, and therefore mothers were targeted as a group for ideological brain washing. The effect was that school non-attendance came to equal bad mothering (Carlen *et al.*, 1992) initiating a long tradition of maternal involvement (David, 1993) and guilt exploitation (Phtiaka, 1996a; Maclachlan, 1996) from school. While trying to achieve its own goals and satisfy its own needs, the school was not particularly sensitive to the needs of the families[1]. This is evident in that the law, while forcing children to attend and parents to send them to school, 'fails to provide independent support mechanisms for families 'in trouble' to ensure effectively their children's education or school attendance' (Carlen *et al.*, 1992, p. 26). Allow me to interpret this in the following fashion. Regarding schooling, the state regulates for the family in such a way that

the family is obliged to serve/support the state but the state is not obliged to serve/ support the family. Under these circumstances some child-rearing practices are considered valid and others are not. Those that are considered valid are middle class practices facilitated by middle class stability of income and residence. With relevance to their behaviour and attitude towards school some parents are seen as ideal – they are considered to be succeeding – and others as deficient – they are considered to be failing. Thus is created the myth of problem and non-problem families which allows for professional interference not only at school level, but increasingly at family level as well (Carlen *et al.*, 1992).

Clearly the roots of the notion of cooperation between home and school were 'the school dictates, the home cooperates' – hardly a cooperation at all. As has been indicated elsewhere (Phtiaka, 1996a; Paige Smith, 1997; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997) what schools have for a long time called partnership or even cooperation, is nothing but regulation of family life and a 'relationship' dictated by the school on its own terms. Parents have simply been expected to conform.

What is true for mainstream education is true a hundred fold in the case of special education (Paige Smith, 1997; Martin, 2000; Simmons, 2000). The notion of family pathology is intensified here through the idea of 'not healthy not normal child' (Carlen *et al.*, 1992, p.24). Professional interference, 'ostensibly a supportive, caring and educative process' (Carlen *et al.*, 1992, p.24) takes the form of crucial decision-making for the future of the child – and the family – not only without the slightest form of consultation, but often against the declared wishes of the parents (Tomlinson, 1982). Not only were parents obliged to send their children to school as all other parents were, but they were for a long time forced to send them to a school which was not of their own choice, or even a school that was directly opposed to their desires and stated wishes; quite possibly a school that they considered as a stigma for the child and the family as a whole (Beveridge, 1997; Paige-Smith, 1997; Vlachou, 1997). Indeed there have been cases where parents have been punished for failing to conform to the professionals' choice of school (Mason, 1998 quoted in Simmons, 2000).

The notion of partnership between parents and professionals in mainstream and special schools is relatively new and needs to be questioned. It possibly stems from a coincidence of interest between parental pressure groups and governmental concern about the amount of responsibility which has in the space of 100 years been transferred from the home to the school. This is all backed up by research worldwide (Epstein 1992; Cairney *et al.*, 1995; MacBeath, 1996; Bastiani & Wolfendale, 1996) indicating how effective school learning is with family support (with zero expense for the State) and how true stands the opposite. However the viability of an equal relationship to support a partnership between home and school has often been questioned in the literature (Phtiaka, 1996a; Paige Smith,

1997; Beveridge, 1997). In their analysis Vincent & Tomlinson (1997) compare it to the notion of citizen participation which appeared as 'a good thing' in the seventies. They indicate that – for Britain – this notion was related to the rise of the ideal of 'education as a private interest' as that was developed in the 80's repositioning parents as consumers of education services. Martin (2000) follows a similar argument, while Riddell *et al.* (1994) suggest that for Scotland 'parental power is regarded as the engine for the introduction of market-place disciplines into the public sector' (p. 328).

Whatever the case, the notion of partnership between home and school appears to be a product of the last 25 years or so (Toomey, 1996; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997; Martin, 2000). In the UK the need for parents to be seen and treated as partners in special education dates back to 1978 as it appears to have its roots in the Warnock Report (Beveridge, 1997; Mallett, 1997; Paige-Smith, 1997) and is first adopted in the educational legislation of 1981. However despite the good intentions of the Report and the legislation that followed, 'parents were not given any 'rights' to challenge the decisions made by LEAs in the 1981 Education Act' (Paige-Smith, 1997, p. 43). The partnership notion did not therefore fully materialise until the Education Act of 1993 came to being, and indeed not until the publication of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs in 1994 (DfE, 1994). Up to that point, and quite often after that too, professional attitude towards parents was characterised as 'parentitis' (Russell, 1997), and was not very helpful.

Cyprus

For Cyprus the special education legislation which is currently in existence[2] (N. 47/1979) makes no mention of parents at all – a similar situation to that observed in mainstream education (Kyriakides, 1999). This piece of legislation, the first ever regarding special education, combines some interesting features. Passed through Parliament nineteen years after the declaration of the independent Republic of Cyprus in 1960 and two years after the death of Archbishop Macarios in 1977, the 1979 legislation principally aimed at tying the lose ends in Cyrpiot Special Education and providing the legal framework for the function of a number of special schools that had been operating on the island since 1929. The law, voted in the aftermath of the Warnock Report in the UK (1978), retains nevertheless a separatist philosophy and emphasises the role of the special school in the education of children with special needs. It offers a common policy for the operation of all special schools established up to 1979 and it outlines the State responsibilities towards four categories of children with special needs: the physically disabled (including sensory disabilities) the maladjusted, the mentally

handicapped and the slow learners[3]. These are all the categories of special needs defined by, and therefore catered for, the 1979 law. Parents are not mentioned in the legislation and they have no access to decision-making regarding their child. They have the right to be informed of the final outcome but they have no official means of challenging it.

On the 28th July 1999 a new legislation regarding special education was passed through the Cypriot Parliament. This was the outcome of a gestating period of seven years, dating back to the publication of the Constandinides (Constandinides, 1992) Report, a Cypriot version of the Warnock Report which did for Cyprus what the latter did for the UK, namely it introduced the notion of integration of children with special needs in the mainstream school, adopting a heavily critical stance towards existing legislation i.e. N.47/1979. The new piece of legislation allowed the State a space of two years to prepare for integration – which is its main philosophy. Under the new Law (N. 113(1)/1999) parents have a right to have their views heard at various points during the assessment process, they can veto the placement chosen and they are offered the option of making alternative educational arrangements for their child if they so wish. It is quite indicative that although the word 'parent' is never mentioned in the legislation of 1979, it is mentioned no fewer that 21 times in the new legislation. The parent has the right to bring into the assessment process an advocate (professional) of his/her own choice and to provide any information that pertains to the case. The decision is then taken by the Educational Committee and the parent is informed. The decision is not final, parents have the right to challenge it, but the Committee does have the final word and the parent who does not wish to comply is left with the sole option of opting out of the State Education system.

As it has already been pointed out, it is a research project of the future to see how parents, who were instrumental in the enforcement of the 1999 Special Education Law, respond to the new legislation, and to what extent they become involved in the decision-making process. What we shall concern ourselves with at this point in time is how home and school (mainstream or special, state or private) used to relate to each other under the old legislation (and still do in the transition stage), and what the outcomes of this relationship were for the child concerned.

The study

In order to answer these questions and illustrate the point more clearly, I have chosen to focus on a case study of a young boy with special needs (Chris for the purposes of this paper), seen from three perspectives: those of his mother, his school head teacher, and his home tutor. In an effort to give a coherent picture of

the situation, the paper skits across areas covering Chris' history from pregnancy until data collection time.

In the context of a broader study which examined home-school relations, Chris was *observed* in school (a private special school which he was then attending) and chatted to at school and at home. *Interviews* were held with his mother (at home in the presence of Chris and his younger brother and temporarily the father), with his special school head-teacher (at school on the day of the observation) and his home tutor (in my office). All three women were tape-recorded for convenience and accuracy. The fieldwork was completed in the space of two months. All interviews were carried out in Greek and have been translated from me.

Student profile

It is, I believe, pertinent to begin with a description of the boy's profile. It is already indicative of the perceptual differences between home and school to try and do that from a school and a home viewpoint. Seen from a professional's point of view Chris would look something like that:

Chris:
- born 1983
- father: civil servant – University Education
- mother: civil servant – Secondary School Education
- second of three boys
- attends special school in private sector
- problem: learning difficulties with autistic features; unidentified cause

This, on the other hand, is how his mother sees him:

> Mother: Everything was normal, natural birth, he weighed 4 kgs, he was breastfed, all normal... He said all these words that small children say: agou, mama, papa, normally; he was quieter than my first boy, but my first born was such a naughty child that I thought there was something wrong with him. I thought Chris was normal. He was a cheerful baby, used to be obedient, used to listen to me, used to eat all his food...

What would be described as a problem child by a professional, was in fact a dream child for his mother, an opinion that will only be disputed by those of us who are not mothers and/or have never attempted to feed a child or get him to cooperate. The mother is passionate (and why should she not be?) in her

description of this beautiful and pleasant child who, on growing, becomes increasingly a great source of concern. Her emphatic declarations on how normal everything was (she uses the word three times and a number of synonyms too) is only the source of shattered expectations. Chris, the subject of such pride and joy, will prove to be 'not normal' devastating his mother's heart. The mother watches closely the child's development and begins to feel that something is wrong. The father, whom she confides in, does not see, or does not wish to see, any differences between his first and second sons. All hopes and fears of the mother centre in school because she feels that schooling will be the ultimate test.

On school entry her worst fears are confirmed. Chris is proven to be what teachers would call 'a problem child'. This is not how his mother sees the situation as the first unhappy days of primary school begin.

The mainstream experience

> Mother: ...Unfortunately he did not find a good teacher as we expected. She was a problem teacher. As soon as she saw him, she saw him in a negative way... From the very first day... I went with him and I waited in the court for them to come out for break. As soon as they came out I asked: 'what is happening with Chris?' and immediately she took a hostile attitude towards me. 'I did not manage to communicate with him' she said. (...) The teacher did not want the child at all. She never tried to help him. She did not accept him. She never loved him at all. She used to throw him out of the class. He used to try to get in and she used to make other children push him out... The child was very unhappy. The head teacher used to stand up for her. He used to say that she was a good teacher. Good, but...

This is obviously a disappointing school start whose negative effects last throughout school as there is a collision between school professionals, or so the mother experiences it. In her brief summary of Chris' five long years of mainstream school experience, she recalls the class teachers – the first one in particular – as unhelpful and unloving, and the school head as uncooperative. There are in the home-school literature plenty of examples on how a positive school experience can help a child forward. Let us follow here the trail of a negative one that takes the child backwards diminishing its existing skills, destroying its self-confidence and – most importantly – making it thoroughly unhappy:

(...) We could see he was getting worse in school. He suffered a lot. He withdrew within himself. He did not speak at all for some time. He did not speak at all. He wanted water, he would show it to me. He wanted water, he showed me the water. He stopped talking. He was in a bad state. He... I did not know what to do... And so I said: 'let's take him to a special school', even though it was very difficult for me to take my kid to a special school. I could not imagine it. But we were forced, seeing how the child suffered. I would see him every morning dragging his feet to school, pale... He used to get so upset he went pale.

Without help, support and understanding the parents continue the battle with the primary school for a long number of years, which turn out to be completely and irreversibly wasted for Chris. Paige-Smith (1997, p.47) argues that parents of children with special needs are faced with all the prejudice which anybody with a disability is faced with, and so appears to be the case with Chris' mother. Yet, she insists on keeping her child in the mainstream school convinced that this is the best option for him and scared to move him to a special school as the head teacher suggests. An older student with learning difficulties suggests (see Peters, 1999, p.114) that 'labelling makes you one of two things: weak or strong'. Chris' mother indicates this, showing also that – as Paige-Smith (1997) suggests – she has no means of combating the prejudice that hurts her other than rejecting it.

Mallett (1997, p. 34) a parent herself, suggests that 'parental perspective is significantly informed by early experiences of dealing with professionals' and 'bad practice is remembered'. Along these lines, Chris' mother develops at the same time a mistrust in professionals, a stubborn attitude towards them, and a deep anxiety regarding their decision-making which influences her child's and her own life. Mallett (1997, p. 35) reckons that in such circumstances a parent can react in one of two ways: 'we can experience an isolation that renders us so anxious and disempowered that we either become the aggressive warrior (fighting all the way) or passive and defenceless against any bad practice'. Is it possible to do both at the same time? Chris' mother is obviously very tender and hurting while appearing uncompromising and uncooperative with professionals.

Lack of information, guidance and support is added to the insult she experiences and makes it even more difficult for her to accept the need for transfer to a special school. She opposes what she considers a stigmatised form of schooling (Beveridge, 1997; Vlachou, 1997) not least because of the father's denial to accept there is any need for Chris to attend a special school. Riddell *et al.* (1994) and Paige-Smith (1997) among others have argued that acceptance of special needs is occasionally harder for middle class parents who consider it as a

threat to their middle class status and social standing, and this could be true for Chris' family. His father's resistance could however also be interpreted as a gender issue which would need to be further researched. It has been indicated (David, 1993; Maclachlan, 1996; West *et al.,* 1998) that mothers are those who undertake all the hard work that is often associated with school negotiations and support of children's progress. It is also true, however, that fathers are all those who fill the positions of power in governing and other bodies associated with schools while mothers claim they have too much to do at home (actually supporting the child's learning) to be able to participate in decision-making (Phtiaka, 1998).

What happens in special education? The same division of labour appears to be taking place there, with mothers doing all the 'dirty' work and fathers taking all the credit. At the same time something very interesting occurs. Fathers appear to have much greater difficulty accepting the child's special need, as if this were a blow to their own masculine ego, and they seem to either completely disassociate themselves from the child's education or over-compensate for the deviance by building an activist career in parental pressure groups. More research along these lines can help us answer these questions more fully. What is important to note here is that such seeds of disagreement within the family leave the mother trapped between competing pressures and unable to decide, as well as powerless. In Chris' case all this deliberation caused an incredible amount of delay in developmentally crucial years. He was transferred to the special school while in the fifth year of his education as the interview with the head teacher indicates:

> Helen: Chris has been here for some time... Which year was he at school when he came?
> Head teacher: (...) He came from the 6th year in the state school (names school) in 1994.
> Helen: 6th? I don't think he had gone that far...
> Head teacher: (checking the file) 5th year...
> Helen: 5th? I thought he was in the 3rd year
> Head teacher: 5th year. This is the father's handwriting...

The home tutor who is employed much later to assist him at home can give us an idea of how important those lost years were for Chris' life.

> Helen: What were you told that the child had?
> Tutor: Autism
> Helen: What do you think he has?

Tutor: It is a case of mild mental retardation with autistic features. (...) He is not an autistic child... No, no, It is mental retardation with autistic features (...) It is very mild, it is not serious at all, but he is having difficulties due to these autistic features...

Helen: Did he always have them?

Tutor: Yes, he did but they did not pay any attention then (when he was a small child). They did not know enough to spot them. (...) They were increasing as time passed... were getting worse. At the age he is now it is not possible for them to be reduced... (...) some have been reduced, some bad habits he had...

Helen: From the little I saw Chris, and I am not in the business of making a diagnosis, I got the impression that his retardation is very mild, and I wonder if he could not have achieved a lot more by now... if he could not be an independent individual...

Tutor: Yes, he could, yes! (...) but as the mother has told me they had nobody to help them in the primary school. The head teacher did not care. Chris was for him a problem, a nuisance, just one more trouble. He was looking for ways to get rid of him. (...) He lost a lot of valuable time in his childhood.

In the light of parental and professional worries regarding the delay of one or two years in assessment (Riddell *et al.*, 1994), five wasted years is an enormous amount of time.

Change of heart

In 1994, when Chris was already 11 years old, his parents began to appreciate that his schooling was having a very negative impact on him (instead of helping him develop and maximise his potential, which is presumably what school needs to be doing). They decided to take him to a private special school. Perhaps not surprisingly it was not the head teacher of the mainstream school who finally persuaded them to do this, despite his efforts for years, but rather the head teacher of a special school. There is possibly nothing wrong with this. However, this was a private special school which had recently started to function (1992) and it is reasonable to expect that the head teacher was doing some serious recruiting – after all a private school is a business. Perhaps nothing wrong again. Parents are allowed to make alternative or private arrangements for their own children and they do (Phtiaka, 1996a; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). But should they have to? A parent, quoted in Riddell *et al.* (1994), disagrees: 'You should not have to fight to have your children properly educated

and look at private education to achieve this!' (p. 336). I do not therefore wish to dispute the parental right to choose alternative options. I rather wish to indicate that lack of support from the state system leaves the parent with no other option but private education. It also leaves him or her very vulnerable to anyone who appears to be sympathetic and offering a listening ear, regardless of his or her qualifications and – of course – at a price. In Chris' case bad communication with and lack of support from the State system led to the build up of mistrust and suspicion. His parents (also in Mallett, 1997 and Paige Smith, 1997) were then open to other apparently friendlier voices:

> Helen: It is interesting that it was a woman outside the education system that persuaded you to take the child to a special school, while no one in school managed to do so.
> Mother: Yes, they didn't because we could see that they were not really interested, they didn't care... They just wanted a trouble out of their hands. They did not love the child (...) The head teacher would tell us but we could not be persuaded. We insisted that Chris had to stay in the mainstream school.
> Helen: Why did you not believe him? Did you not trust him?
> Mother: Yes! We did not see them love the child and want the best for him. We didn't get that feeling. And the word 'special school' was too distant for us. We could not accept it. Now... now the word special is part of our life, but back then... we could not accept it then at all...

We can see in the mother's words the big disappointment parents felt with the school and we can deduce from that what an easy prey such disappointed parents must have been in the hands of anyone wanting to promote his or her personal interests. So Chris was transferred to the private special school.

The special school

For a number of reasons the transfer to the special school did not turn out to be an ideal solution. The child, after an initial happy spell, came to crave for attention once again. Was it because the number of children grew and he was no longer getting enough attention in class? Was it because this place, despite the better marketing devices, was equally unsuitable and/or uncaring for Chris? And how are these two reasons related to the fact that the school is a private business? Is it possible that the recruiting was done on false promises? This is the explanation Chris' mother has to offer:

Helen: How did he get on in the special school?

Mother: Psychologically he felt better. He no longer had that stress that he had in the primary school, but as far as learning goes, not very well. (...) We took the child there thinking that she (the head teacher) would look after him personally. I think she is good in this area (...) but she is the head teacher. And I have been meaning to change his school a couple of years now seeing that she, the woman we believed in, could not help.

Helen: The teachers?

Mother: They are nice girls, but they do not know how to help... They are nursery teachers and such like... They have five[4] children in the class and I can say that they have really not bothered much about Chris...

To complement his mother's assessment, it is quite plain from the head teacher's own words that Chris' emotional needs were not addressed:

Helen: Can you tell me a little about Chris? When, how, why he came, where he is at, where he is going...

Head teacher: Chris could simply write two-syllable words without being able to put them in sentences. He could copy, but his letters were not readable. He could not read complexes of two consonants at the beginning of the words. He could use art materials, paints, crayons, colour pencils but without any creative result, and that under instruction. He could not draw straight lines...

In reply to a very broad question regarding Chris, the head-teacher addresses simply the question of skills, which was not even the most important reason for his transfer to her school. She seems to have no interest (or to be in no position) to describe Chris' emotional development in the last few years. Clearly, Chris' needs are once again not addressed properly. Thankfully for Chris, the home tutor's approach, when she comes to help, is quite different:

Tutor: We started off... I had to see where he was at as far as education was concerned...(...) But what I found was a problem, was that he could not write his name... He could just copy...

Helen: What was your first priority when you saw him?

Tutor: It was for him to learn the basic staff. How to behave, to reduce some of his autistic features, to start showing an interest

in school and classes again, to stop being negative, to be more cooperative with his parents as far as studying went... social goals mostly because as far as education goes he is stabilizing now, not much we can do.

It is quite clear that the happy educational interlude in the special school lasted for a very short time. What was the school's contribution? Did it succeed where the mainstream school had failed? There are three points we can make here. They are all related to traditional myths associated with special schools and often used as arguments in their favour.

1. In the special school there no longer existed the immense curriculum pressure that exists in the mainstream. So Chris was relieved of all that stress.

This is hardly an achievement. It is quite obvious that the mainstream curriculum was inappropriate for Chris and other children like him, and appropriate arrangements should therefore had taken place in the mainstream school. Moreover, curriculum changes of this magnitude are always done at an enormous cost, and a stress-free schooling is the least benefit expected.

2. In the special school the class was smaller, so Chris was getting much more attention than before.

This is what happened originally, but as we can see this was probably due to the small number of children attending the school. When the numbers rose, the class grew in size (although the numbers were still considerably smaller than those in the mainstream class) and – more importantly – in breadth of age and needs. The new constitution of the class was clearly not addressing Chris' needs and what was gained from smaller numbers was lost from greater needs.

3. The special school possessed expertise not available in the mainstream.

This seems to be disputed by the mother in her assessment of Chris' progress, and indeed it is not reflected in his development. It is also not backed up by observation data. Interview data is unclear on that as the head teacher was elusive and fuzzy when asked about staff qualifications. The staff spoke about broad educational qualifications, but nothing in the way of special education training and experience. Given that the information collected in school is insufficient to lead to a satisfactory conclusion, suffices here to say that if – contrary to all evidence – such expertise existed, it was not utilised properly.

It appears therefore that the new school, although special (as opposed to the first mainstream school) and private (as opposed to the first State school) did not produce a significantly improved outcome. On the contrary! After an initial happy spell, Chris was once again frustrated and unhappy.

Two years later

Two years after his admission to the special school, Chris was at a turning point again. His behaviour reverted to what it had been in the state school, and he became frustrated, irritable and very difficult to handle at home. The school head teacher seems to have not even noticed the problems faced by Chris and his family, and is rather inclined to put the blame at home for any 'irregularities' that might be occurring when the possibility of a problem is suggested to her.

> Head teacher: He has not had any particular behaviour problems, although his father has mentioned problems at home and stereotypical forms of behaviour that he does not exhibit here.

Two years of dissatisfaction in the special school are enough for parents to employ a home tutor. It appears that once again they are faced with no other option but more private education. The mother's description leaves us in no doubt about the severity of the problem:

> Mother: His behaviour started deteriorating in this school too... And there I was again, not knowing what to do... He started withdrawing. He felt isolated and marginalised, he felt that they were not interested in him...

As the tutor also describes, the boy was in a very bad state indeed, particularly in relation to school, and it is therefore quite striking that the school was so unaware of the problem.

> Tutor: When I started out with Chris, it was at the time when he did not want to go to school, he did not want to write, he did not want to read, he just did not want... If he managed to take the pencil, he used to press it so hard that he used to rip the page. He was at that point. He was in a bad state as far as school was concerned. Just as far as the school was concerned... At home he was just fine! But he refused to do his homework, even with his mother...
> Helen: Why did the parents ask for help? What was their problem?

Tutor: He could not go ahead in school. It was impossible. With all the refusal he could not get anywhere. He could not go ahead.
Helen: What did he do in school?
Tutor: He was negative there too. He was not cooperative. He was O.K. in the beginning, but then... The parents were complaining that he was not receiving enough attention because the woman who had the school took on more students and did not pay as much attention to him, and maybe did not have the right (qualified) staff... This is what they still believe... Seeing that he was not receiving enough attention, Chris reacted in this way. He was negative about everything.

What happened? It appears that the special school failed to address the child's needs. The failure was such that Chris indicated the same symptoms he had indicated while in the mainstream school. Yet the school seems to be quite unaware of the problem and the mother is once again left without support. On top of the school fee she now has to pay a home tutor to help Chris out with his homework. This is a double irony! In the State mainstream sector parents often need to employ such tutors to help their child cope with the mainstream curriculum. In the mainstream private sector this is unheard of! This is exactly what parents pay the school fee for! It is also unheard of in the special mainstream sector because supposedly a special school is there to address educational and emotional needs that the mainstream school has failed to address! Yet it might be the case that parents in special education are often obliged to employ home tutors (we know that they often employ other professionals such as speech-therapists or physiotherapists) too to see their children through the school years. We evidently need more data in this area in order to verify if parents are in effect doubly cheated by the school system. For Chris and his parents this is exactly what happened. Thankfully this was – at last – the solution.

Now

Two years on from the employment of the home tutor (and four years after his registration in the special school) Chris seems to be back on his feet and happy. The school seems to claim all success for itself.

Helen: Tell me first what were your goals for Chris.
Head teacher: Well, all those things that I told you he could not do, recognition of all the numbers without confusing them, we managed to do that. At this point in time, in his last report, just for

you to see, he can add and subtract up to 100 with some help, he can read independently texts at year two level, he can solve problems, he reads faster and comprehends more the text, he uses the full stop, he can take part satisfactorily in group discussions...

The mother seems to believe that the home tutor's presence has worked out miracles. It is useful to add here that the home tutor is a trained special educator with a lot of teaching experience.

Mother: He likes cycling very much! He came first in the European championships. He got gold medals in cycling! (...) We brought a special teacher at home and she helps him with his homework. He has done a lot of progress with that little help, twice a week for an hour each time (...) she has helped him a lot. He has found his self-confidence again. He gets lots of praise in his book, he made no mistakes in his dictation. He did all his work, his books are full of 'bravo' and little stars. Last year – the first year we had the teacher at home – he got a school prize, the prize for best effort. This year too, they are very happy with him, with his efforts...

The home tutor seems to be quite realistic about Chris' successes and failures and about his future prospects.

Tutor: He does not improve much educationally now because he is already fifteen and so we have reached a level where his abilities stabilise. (...) He now writes words. They are completely misspelled, but I don't have a problem with that. So, if he writes EINAI as INE, I think whoever reads is, still reads 'ine', can still understand (...) the text. I take it for granted that he cannot learn all these 'i's and 'e's. And I sort of think that, O.K. in Chris' case it's not the end of the world if he does not learn them, and I no longer insist on such matters. But he has improved enough. He is not... He knows as much as he needs to know as far as language goes. In Maths he is still at addition and subtraction level with difficulty. We need to have an abacus in front of us. (...) But we learned our name (laughs). I insisted a lot on that, learning to write his name by heart, both Chris and Christopher... We improved a little generally...

Evidently, Chris is a much happier young man now than he was two years ago, he is more self-confident and achieving a lot both in academic and other areas. He

can now show his true capabilities and his mother can be proud of him. He can also be proud of himself. It took however nine years of education to reach this point. He does not have many more years of education left, and, as the home tutor points out, this is a time when it becomes increasingly difficult for him to learn new skills.

Expectations

In trying to untangle what went wrong in Chris' education, it seems to me appropriate to start by comparing parental and school expectations (also Kyriakides, 1999). The special school seems to be quite unaware of parental dissatisfaction and rather complacent in its approach.

> Helen: Do you receive any feedback from parents? Is it possible for parents who were once interested to be so no longer because they are disappointed or tired in relation to the school? Maybe they expected more...
>
> Head teacher: ...To be so disappointed with the school... I don't think so... When they bring the children we tell them what our goals are this term for each child...

The home seems to be quite disappointed in their expectations from school. This is hardly surprising as we have followed Chris' progress – or lack of it – in school and the school's lack of sensitivity to the child's problems.

> Mother: Well, they don't offer anything. We were asking for more. We were expecting much more... I had to employ a special teacher at home to help him become accepted, to feel that he loves them and is loved back... Before that he was withdrawn... Now he is O.K. with this teacher's help. He feels that he makes progress, he is learning, and he has taken courage, and so the others have accepted him too. Earlier he had completely lost his self confidence...

Mismatch of expectations between home and school is obviously a source of conflict. Parents feel betrayed in their expectations from school (a fee paying school let me point out again) and the school feels let down (as we shall see) by the parents.

Cooperation

A second point of discussion needs to be the issue of co-operation between home and school. In Chris' case, cooperation between home and school is simply non-existent:

> Mother: We thought he would have more attention, more care in the private sector, but I cannot say this is true. The state (special) school is the same. I went and saw it...
> Helen: Are you thinking of taking him there?
> Mother: Yes, yes...I went last year, and I wrote a letter asking for him to be transferred to the state sector...

The school is very unhappy with the parents' lack of cooperation and has no explanation for it apart from parental lack of interest in the child's progress. This is a regular school complaint regarding parents, and it is both very common and quite mistaken as indicated by relevant research (Phtiaka, 1996a, 1998). In Chris' case where we have followed the child's misfortunes in school, this is quite an ironic statement coming from a school that obviously had too little interest in the child's progress to notice the turmoil he was going through:

> Helen: Whom do you have a closer cooperation with? The father or the mother?
> Head teacher: (remains silent)
> Helen: Well, you need to tell me. This is the main point of our discussion.
> Head teacher: (nods negatively)
> Helen: Neither? You never had or has it deteriorated? Is it one of the cases you described earlier who start off enthusiastically and later lose interest?
> Head teacher: Well, I don't think we ever had...
> Helen: Don't they ever come now?
> Head teacher: Well, we communicate by phone.
> Helen: Who initiates this communication?
> Head teacher: Either the class teacher or we (the head) for information.
> Helen: I found it particularly interesting that Chris' diary[5] was the only one that had no parental signatures...
> Head teacher: Yes...
> Helen: Did this start recently or has it always been like that?

Head teacher: Well, some times they sign but not very often.
Helen: Do they see it and not sign or do they just not see it?
Head teacher: If a parent saw it, they would sign.

The implication in the head teacher's words is that the parents are not interested in the child's progress. This is quite preposterous given the efforts the family has made to keep Chris happy in school, and yet this is the most common view schools have of families when something goes wrong. The research literature is full of head teachers and teachers in mainstream and special schools telling us that the problem lies with the family.

They usually have some indication for this, like the one offered here. They usually are wrong (Phtiaka, 1996a, 1998). In this case we are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to cross-check their views. We also have the benefit of the home tutor's insight. She seems to have a much more plausible explanation:

Tutor: You know there was a little misunderstanding... Some time ago the teacher wrote in his diary that they should come and talk about Chris' hygiene, and the parents did not like that, they thought that it was meant negatively for them and so they stopped signing the diary.

Evidently a very interesting case: the school (is it only this school?) has reached such a point of alienation from the family and the child that it has developed the view that:

1. it meets the child's needs;
2. the child has no problems in school — what problems there are at home are the home's business;
3. the child's progress is a credit to the school;
4. the child's problems is a debit to its family;
5. and to cap it all the family does not care enough for the child!

Well, it simply is not true! We know that in this case it is the school that has shown a unique lack of sensitivity to the problems of the child and those of the parents. We also know from other research (Phtiaka, 1996a, 1998) that whenever we examine the home and the school in parallel, school claims about parental lack of interest in children's education are mistaken. Indeed, they are insulting as they often stem from lack of enough interest on the school's part to find out what is really going on at home. And yet, the deficit model of parenting has so dominated the field of home-school relations that parents have very rarely been given the benefit of the doubt.

So, can we at least claim that this is all a big misunderstanding due to lack of effective communication?

Communication

We could argue that lack of effective communication results in a lack of understanding between home and school. They ignore each other's needs, they are unaware of each other's efforts, and consequently they tend to blame each other for any problems arising. Let us examine this premise.

In theory, both professionals involved in this study are very supportive of the idea of communication between home and school. Both of them agree a good cooperation between home and school will lead to a better future for Chris. In their own words:

> Head teacher: I believe that the biggest percentage of the child's improvement in every level, not only academic, but social and other, does not depend on school but on the parents. The information must be flowing between home and school in the interest of the best development of such children.

> Tutor: I think that there must be a very good relationship. The professional spends half of the day with the child, and the other half is spent by the parent. It is not a good idea to have one do 'X' work in the morning and the other one to do something else, or not to continue the same. I mean, they must help each other, there must be a relationship of mutual support, mutual help...

In practice – as we have seen – there is no cooperation at all between home and school neither in the first nor in the second school. Here is the mother's description:

> Helen: (...) I don't suppose you had this kind of conversations in the primary school...
> Mother: In the primary school? No, no...
> Helen: They just asked you to go and be informed about the problems I expect...
> Mother: Yes, yes...
> Helen: Didn't they ever invite you to ask for your help, your cooperation at home, to see what you can do...

Mother: No, just when he had problems they used to tell us about his problems...

Helen: And did they not suggest solutions... things that could be done to help solve the problem?

Mother: No. In the first few years they did not suggest anything, they just used to tell us, and then they were telling us about sending him to a special school.

Helen: So that was the only solution suggested...

Mother: Yes, yes, yes...

Helen: They never said that if you too help at home a bit, things may improve...

Mother: No, the did not say anything...

Helen: Did you never have the feeling that your help could make a difference?

Mother: We used to oppress him, we used to oppress him and he used to react in a very negative way. He used to withdraw within himself.

Helen: Didn't the school try to show you how to help?

Mother: No.

Helen: And neither did the special school...

Mother: No, no...

Helen: So you just entrusted him in their hands when he went there...

Mother: Yes, yes... I just thought that the head teacher would help...

Evidently there is no cooperation at all between home and school and no support from one to the other. Interestingly, as indicated in the quotation that follows, the parents are by now quite clear about their own failings. They have learned that they can expect nothing from school, so they seek alternative ways of solving school problems:

Helen: Doesn't the school involve you at all, ask you or inform you so that you can help the children at home?

Mother: Because Chris does not want at all to be helped, I haven't asked... They have a diary and they write daily what they have done, and they also write the homework he has to do. This is the information we get.

Helen: The home tutor looks at that I expect... What did you do before she came?

Mother: I used to try and help him, he did not accept, and so he used to go to school unprepared... Maybe that's why he fell behind.

Helen: Don't you have cooperation with the special school? To go regularly...

Mother: Only when they invited us. We did not go on our own accord.

Helen: Does Chris have an individualised programme of learning? Do you know?

Mother: I don't know, no...

Helen: (...) How do you get on with the teachers in school?

Mother: O.K.

Helen: You communicate well with them...

Mother: Well, we do, they don't offer anything. We were asking for more. We were expecting much more...

It is fascinating to see on the other hand that the school is once again completely unaware of the parents' position and of its own responsibilities in the situation that has arisen. It is in fact quite arrogant in its approach suggesting that the staff have done everything in their power to keep the communication channels with the family open, while it is quite clear even from the statement offered that such channels are quite deaf to parental pleas:

Helen: Is it possible to have good will on all sides and be troubled by bad communication? For the school to have the good will to cooperate, the parents the same, and you are just simply not communicating this to each other?

Head teacher: Bad communication? No, because if they cannot communicate with the teacher, they can try the head. They can even take their problem to the Parents' Association. If they are not successful there their last choice is the Board of Governors. So, I think that there are many choices. We cannot say that they have no choice.

To parental quests for care and support the school juxtaposes procedures. To hurt parental feelings the school recommends quasi-legal measures. This is a private special school – by any definition a school created for – and paid for – caring.[6] What can we expect of schools that are not tailored to care? Is this a unique case? I think not! (Phtiaka, 1996a, 1998). Is this an uncaring society? This is a society where children never leave home – and of course they definitely don't at eighteen – where three generations of family gather round Sunday lunch, where any child is everyone's child and never the question – whose child is this – a

rises when cookies are passed around. This is a Mediterranean society where the industrial revolution – and the alienation that followed – never took place, where post-modern financial transactions co-exist with almost pre-modern societal structures.

So, where is the problem?

Conclusions

We have to conclude – it seems – that the problem lies with the model employed by the school to interpret its relationship with the family. It is a deficit model used to everyone's detriment. This is not an exceptional case (Scott & Morrison, 1994). What is happening here is cross-checked in many schools, in many countries in the mainstream and the special sectors in the State and the Private spheres. Schools all over the world, even schools that are especially designed to care[7], appear to have a very particular way of looking at things. They are far more interested in control and procedure than they ever are in children, and yet they often are arrogant enough to claim that they are more interested in children than their own parents are. This is because they do not understand their parents' viewpoint and possibly because they do not care enough to discover it. If the analysis offered by Vlachou (1997) is correct, then the problem intensifies in special education. The deficit model used here is entrenched in the widely held deficit view of disability. That in turn is based on the medical model assumption which: 'treats disability as a defect of the individual, and his/her symptoms as the signs of an underlying cause of disability' (p.153).

Parents in most cases – in special education in particular – have few means to defend themselves and their children.[8] Occasionally, as the case is here, they have the money to provide alternative and/or supplementary education, but this is not very common and we need not rely on it. Research in this area has a duty to bring out the parents' voice not simply because this is fair, nor in order to redress the balance and show what has been constructed as individual despair for the social disadvantage it often is (Armstrong, 1995). Not even just because lack of criticism serves to reproduce current practice (Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). We, with the help of the parents (Martin, 2000), need to bring out the parents' voice simply in order to make our schools more humane.

For it is to be expected that humane schools will in the long term create a more humane society for all of us. It is simply a matter of survival of the species.

Notes

1. Vincent & Tomlinson (1997) develop a similar argument regarding home-school contracts which is a phenomenon of the nineties. It is quite interesting that the dynamics between home and school remain basically the same in a long space of time.
2. The new legislation comes in force on July 27th 2001.
3. The terms are translated from the Greek as closely as possible
4. There were many more than five. I counted nine during observation (including the absentees) aged between 7 and 20.
5. The school used the system of a home-school diary where the class teacher comments on the child's doings during the day and parents sign it to show they have been informed.
6. The school brochure cover proudly states: the human relationship!
7. Even though Vincent & Tomlinson (1997) warn us that special education professionals are no more likely than others to involve parents.
8. It is accepted here that parents have different needs (Toomey, 1996; Russell, 1997; Phtiaka, 1998) and also different means of influencing policy (Riddell *et al.,* 1994; Paige-Smith, 1997; Vincent & Tomlinson. 1997). The statement made however on the whole still holds true.


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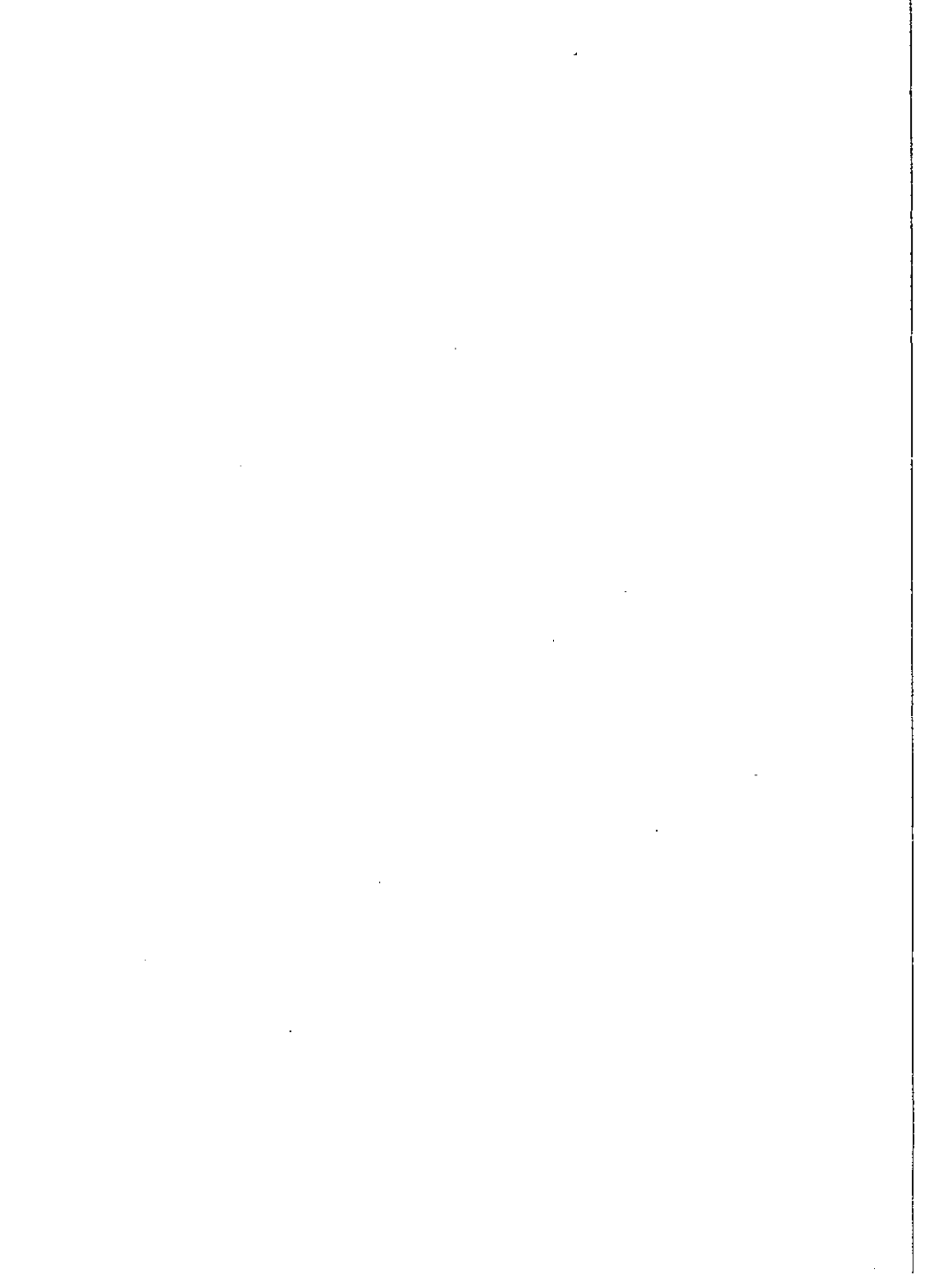
BOOK REVIEWS

Hans G. Schuetze and Maria Slowey (ed.) *Higher Education and Lifelong Learners – International Perspectives on Change*, **Routledge/ Falmer, 2000, ISBN 0 415 24793-4 (hbk), ISBN 0 415 24794-2 (pbk), v +244pp index included.**

Nowadays the world is passing through speedy and constant changes in its economic and social aspects. These changes are attributed to various issues such as the advancement of technology, the intensification of globalisation forces and a sense of competitiveness among European countries.

Among other issues which today's knowledge-based economy and society is facing, one could mention the problem of unemployable young and adult individuals because they lack proper qualifications, updated training and skills. The increases in the aging workforce and job mobility are two other factors that could be added to this picture. People are becoming more flexible to change their job for a better one during their life duration and not stick to the same one. This requires individuals to become responsible to update their own knowledge by seeking to engage in learning from different areas in life such as community, work, and educational institutions. Among these institutions one could mention colleges and universities, with particular reference to traditional universities, which need to be more open and flexible and hence capable of catering to the individuals' needs and aspirations. Therefore, although individuals' motivation to engage in learning is crucial, the availability to acquire such learning is of paramount importance. Furthermore, one also needs to highlight the importance of different non-conventional methods of learning such as information and communication technologies (ICT's).

In so doing, individuals will be developing their interests, abilities and skills in different fields, which involve creativity, reasoning, democratic competence and social responsibility. They can develop these interests even after compulsory schooling, for their own satisfaction or because they are asked to do so by their employers. This is the post-Fordist vision of a more effective and efficient workforce, that is having workers, young or adults, who are no longer passive but equipped with various social and personal skills, together with a high level of general education or specialized qualifications and training. All these issues are forcing today's knowledge based economy and society to focus on an essential concept – *lifelong learning.*

This concept can offer individuals the opportunity to improve their employability and adaptability. This will limit their social exclusion by enabling

them to update their knowledge through learning within the work place but also to participate in higher education programmes of studies without giving up their job. Participation in such programmes is becoming increasingly common, in today's world, due to the demand of the learning society. Higher education had conceptualized the need to be available not only to young people but also to adults of all ages without any social class, gender and race barriers.

Higher Education and Lifelong Learners (2000) is a book which illustrates this concept very well, in the light of the changes in higher education. All those with a keen interest in, or are involved in adult education, comparative education, higher education and lifelong learning should find this text of central importance. Edited by Hans G. Schuetze and Maria Slowey, who are also contribute papers to the volume, the text represents a comparative analysis highlighting two major concepts which are significant in the process of change in higher education, namely the concepts of *non-traditional students* and *lifelong learning*.

All comparative viewpoints are drawn from ten different papers written by various contributors with remarkable knowledge and expertise in higher education and lifelong learning. All contributions are based on a case-study approach carried out in ten different countries, all of them members of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) at universities, colleges and technical institutes taking also into consideration programmes delivered in connection with external partners. Five European countries, members of the EU, were taken into consideration in this study, namely Austria, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the study focuses on other countries outside Europe: Canada, the United States, Australia, Japan, and New Zealand. This definitely gives the book some standing in the arena of comparative studies/ research. This work follows another comparative study by OECD carried out in 1987, focusing on adults' participation in higher education. The countries chosen for this first study were the same as the ones chosen for this work.

The concept of lifelong learning can be found in all the papers. Another feature is the presence of papers inquiring of the characteristics and attributes that give the right picture of a non-traditional student. Is there a non-traditional student? Would he term, 'under-represented student', be more appropriate in an era of lifelong learning? Various interpretations were given. However all the attributes of a non-traditional student are closely interdependent. Hans Pechar and Angela Wroblewski argue that in Austria, non-traditional students are those who enter higher education via other alternative qualifications, that is non-conventional qualifications, achieved through other secondary routes. However, there are also those studying on a part-time basis due to work and work related commitments.

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Also very interesting is the study carried out by Seth Agbo in the American context. Agbo, basing his work on a study by Horn, L.J and Carroll, C.D in 1996 entitled *Non-Traditional Undergraduates: Trends in Enrollment from 1986 to 1992 and Persistence and Attainment Among 1989-1990 Beginning Post-Secondary Students*, considers non-traditional students in three categories: minimally non-traditional students, moderately non-traditional students and highly non-traditional students. These categories clearly show the sociological changes affecting the American higher education student. However, the attributes of the American non-traditional student include students studying on a part-time basis due to work, students who decide to pursue higher education after a long period of time and those who decide to take long to finish their studies. But there are also those who have to financially support themselves and others, such as individuals who are independent from their families, single parents and bread winners who need to support their family.

On the other hand, Roger Boshier and John Benseman identify non-traditional students in New Zealand. Their analysis focuses on the discourse of equal opportunities, taking into account the Maori and Pacific Islanders people together with older people, women, immigrants, individuals of low socio-economic status and those coming from rural areas. This discourse of equal opportunities regarding non-traditional students, or better under-represented groups is also present in the Australian contribution by Richard James and David Beckett, in the British contribution by Maria Slowey and in the Swedish contribution by Agnieszka Bron and Karin Agélii.

Such a comparative analysis illuminates certain change patterns that should occur in the higher education systems of the above-mentioned countries in order to increase the participation of non-traditional students in higher education. These include governance and control (this entails institutional autonomy and decentralization of decision-making), institutional differentiation (this requires traditional universities to be more open and flexible regarding conventional entry qualifications for a more flexible admission criteria) and financial help. Moreover, access to advanced learning opportunities is sought for more participation and a better mode of learning plus other types of support which could make the lives of non-traditional learners or those who are under represented less (or not) complicated at all.

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Finger, Matthias & Asún, José Manuel, *Adult Education at the Crossroads: Learning our Way Out,* **ZED Books, London & New York, 207pp., 2001, ISBN 1-85649-751-8 (pbk.); 1-85649-750-X (hbk.)**

With yet another war looming precariously over the world and the constant reminder by the media that this world drama possibly resulted as a fundamentalist response against the neo-colonisation process of the West over the Islamic East, the book by Finger and Asun which argues for a radical reconceptualisation of adult education which would convert it into a vehicle of struggle against the harmful processes of globalisation – and therefore the domination of the industrialised over poorer communities – gains a lot of relevance.

Finger and Asun, like many authors before them, claim that adult education has been co-opted by the neo-liberal drive and, in order not to end up in a theoretical and practical *cul de sac*, must deconstruct and reconstruct itself into a force which combats this new world order from below – from the people's lived realities by valuing their endogenous knowledge, needs, beliefs and culture.

Adult education, like industrial civilisation, is at a crossroads. The authors therefore pose the questions:

> 'Should adult education continue to travel the path of development, and accompany the world to a dead end? Or should adult education, rather abandon the development highways, where it will almost certainly make money yet lose its soul, and go back to its original agenda of social action and change? (p.137)'

Adult education, the authors maintain, has no choice: it must face the challenges of learning our way out and build a sustainable eco-centred society. The main inspiration comes from Ivan Illich whose major contributions to adult education are described in the first chapter of the book. Indeed, Illich's belief in deschooling and de-institutionalizing adult education permeates the whole book.

In the first part of the book, Finger and Asun take us to a journey of discovery and analysis of the main historical traditions of adult education that is portrayed as a field which lacks coherence and integration both in theory and practice. This section offers the reader an interesting array of what adult education is and what it is developing into. The journey takes us to the 'the highway of pragmatism', 'the freeway of humanism for lonely travellers', 'the multiple trails of Marxism' and UNESCO's 'scientific humanism', all of which, the authors argue, reinforced the dehumanising development paradigm and failed to invert the

hegemonic expertocratic ideology. In these first chapters we meet the major adult education theorists including Dewey, Lindeman, Rogers, Knowles, Brookfield and Freire.

I was surprised that the authors did not explore the important contributions to adult education theory made by the Italian Antonio Gramsci. His educational theory provides an interesting but counter strategy to that proposed by Illich and the authors. Indeed, Gramsci proposes that, instead of dismantling the institutions which maintain hegemony and work against social democracy, organic intellectuals and educators work 'within' the institutions with the aim of transforming them into liberatory agencies. I was also surprised that Paulo Freire was classified simply as a Marxist, since his philosophy draws on a broader range of sources.

The second part of the book highlights the profound changes that have occurred in industrial development and society. The development process and its 'slave' – adult education – have become so distorted that they can no longer be changed or humanised. They have both reached a dead end. Finger and Asun show how globalisation, casino or turbo-capitalism, the erosion of the state and post-modernism are all the products of a market-centred industrial development process and the concomitant social, cultural and ecological degradation. In this scenario, the authors adopt Illich's 'tools of conviviality' in their proposal of a new theory and practice for a 'new' adult education, which celebrates humanity, endogenous knowledge and sustainable development. Finger and Asun insist that individual and collective emancipation, originating at the local and connecting to the global, will result in a 'social ecological responsibility' scenario that can address post-modern social and economical trends and build sustainable and democratic communities in a social action perspective.

Finger and Asun's Illich-inspired 'theory of learning our way out' outlined in the third part of the book applies awareness-raising, conceptual clarification and the development of bottom-up educational, cultural and political strategies against the pervasive global capitalism with its primary concern with institutionalisation and professionalisation. The author's proposed adult educational strategy is an effort in converting free trade to fair trade, global to local, passive reinforcement of the status quo to political and social action through Participatory Action Research and de-institutionalisation.

What are the limitations of the book? Constantly, throughout the book, Finger and Asun claim that adult education is being co-opted by the neo-liberal drive for commodification – adult education is being packaged and sold in the global market. So the pertinent question is: is writing a book on adult education and selling it on the international market part of this game? The way the book is conceived and structured will surely make the reader ask whether this book is yet

another product of the globalised need to sell. Indeed, one may be tempted to think that the authors gathered the known ideas about adult education, challenged these ideas against the buzzwords of the 21st century – globalisation and sustainable development – and introduced the unique ideas on adult education of Ivan Illich, packaged all and sold the book.

In presenting this conundrum of theoretical ideas and practices in the first section, the authors had to opt for breath rather than depth. This section is unfortunately only attractive and suitable for the novice in adult education as it only provides cursory information about the main theories and practices.

The book is also riddled by a dangerous theoretical paradox. On one hand, the authors, inspired by Illich, argue for a de-institutionalised and state-less society. They then insist that adult education should link up with anarchism in theory and practice (p. 156). On the other hand they are worried about the post-modern erosion of the welfare state – the last vanguard against further dehumanisation by turbo-capitalism (p.111). What should be the final objective of adult education: a democratic sovereign state or a de-industrialised anarchy? The book does not offer a clear direction regarding what adult education should achieve – this is the book's dead end.

In this context the authors also insist that adult education can only be effective in the form of Participatory Action Research in a non-institutionalised (and by implication a non-industrialised) context. Is there no hope for transformation in the industrialised world through participatory action research? It is also important to note that PAR has received scant scientific evaluation – as the book's bibliography certainly proves – and, in my opinion, the authors are wrong in celebrating the effectiveness of PAR without any scientific justification. Indeed, the available research under-evaluates the influence of expert-induced hegemonic knowledge and praxis. It is naïve to believe that PAR develops spontaneously in a community of oppressed individuals living in a de-institutionalised reality as the authors seem to suggest. The impact and effectiveness of PAR must be scientifically assessed before claiming its effectiveness as a social transformation tool.

The authors are also wrong in maintaining that certain ideas proposed in the book are unique to Illich. For example, Finger and Asun claim that Illich is unique in proposing that 'adult education – or rather learning – is the opposite of (expert) knowledge manufactured and crafted *for* the people' (p. 141). A careful re-reading of Paulo Freire's works would certainly prove the claim for uniqueness wrong.

Another gross shortcoming in the book is its insensitivity to women's roles, women's past and women's reality. The authors did definitely not 'sit down and listen to the women'. Women have been significantly silenced in this book as no pioneering woman has been mentioned and male-biased concepts like Malcolm Knowles' 'andragogy' remain unchallenged.

The strength of the book lies in the author's use of the theories proposed by Ivan Illich. I agree with the authors that adult education should occur outside of the 'schooling' paradigm and should resist and challenge hegemonic expert knowledge and practices 'crafted for the people'. Adult education should simultaneously be an epistemological, institutional and political alternative to conventional education. Inspired by Illich (and perhaps Freire), the authors insist that adult education should become a tool of understanding the world in which one lives, so that one can make appropriate decisions about how to live in it. Furthermore, they insist that adult education should become a tool for understanding how to relate to ourselves, to others and to our environment, and how to act accordingly and responsibly. Such understanding can come only from 'below' – from people's active engagement in their own learning process. Learning is therefore done by the people – and not for them – and it entails free and abundant access to tools for learning.

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Fausto Telleri, *IperComenius. Un archivio didattico – Per una Enciclopedia Multimediale aperta,* **Cooperativa Libraria Universitaria Editrice, Bologna, 2000, 155 pp. + Windows CDRom, ISBN 88-491-1467-2 (pbk). With a chapter by Moacir Gadotti, Director of the Paolo Freire Institute of Sao Paolo.**

This book is an updated version of Fausto Telleri's 1996 *IperComenius. Didattica multimediale per insegnare a leggere.* The authors' avowed objective is to demonstrate the educational potential of information technology, departing from the premise that it "does not make pedagogic sense any more to exclude computers and the Internet from the classroom." The authors contend that the challenge facing educators nowadays, and particularly those inspired by a social constructivist pedagogy, is how best to exploit the new technologies, and in particular the Internet. The real objective, however, seems to be to present the accompanying software – a tool developed by Professor Telleri for teachers of 5 to 15 year olds, intended for archiving teaching materials, managing curricula, designing inter-disciplinary projects (*Unita` Didattiche*), creating item banks, performing rudimentary item analysis, and keeping class assessment and progress records. Telleri intends this tool to do for current pedagogy what Comenius' *Didaktika Ceska* did for 17th century language teaching – hence the name *IperComenius.*

The *IperComenius* project is a follow-up to an exhaustive analysis of 76 textbooks used in schools in Emilia Romagna between 1989 and 1991, none of which was found to completely fulfil the demands of the curriculum. Moreover, compared to the new media, the traditional text is linear and inflexible. The authors' thesis is that books are no longer the sole purveyors of culture, and traditional text forms lack the variety and versatility needed by the inhabitants of the global village to communicate effectively. Hence was born the idea for an open-ended hypertext tool which would allow both teachers and pupils to create their own 'textbooks' – resource archives (poems, stories, song lyrics, etc.) which can be cross-linked in a variety of ways to suit the learners' needs. In this second edition the *IperComenius* software has been extended to handle resources in a variety of digital media as well as web pages.

The first half of the book (chapter 1 to 3) is an overview of a variety of current educational issues, and how the new technologies offer solutions to long-standing educational problems. The arguments in this part are heavily inspired by the liberation pedagogy of Paolo Freire, although not surprisingly the unaccredited influence of both Celestin Freinet and Mario Lodi of the Italian Cooperative Education Movement are very evident. One strength of this book is that it recognises a truism which is commonplace among the I.T. community, but for the

most part seems to have escaped many educators – that the only reason to become I.C.T. (Information and Communication Technology) literate right now is because one needs to use I.C.T. right now.

Computers can be, and have been, used to program and dehumanise children, but this book is about I.C.T. as a technology of liberation. The authors admit the very real risk that the Internet, in spite of its potential to actuate a collective consciousness which cuts through social hierarchies, may end up further widening the rift between the rich and poor nations – currently 88% of Internet users come from highly industrialised countries. They express the fear that to date globalisation has been largely to the benefit of the few at the expense of those who can benefit most from the new technologies. One statistic which brings this fact home is that Bulgaria has more Internet hosts than all of sub-Saharan Africa excluding South Africa. Similarly, English remains the language of some 80% of Internet users, and therefore non-English speakers are at a disadvantage. However, inspite of all this, the authors' tone throughout remains highly optimistic – sometimes to the extent of trivialising real problems or proposing simplistic solutions. For example, at one point Professor Telleri proposes a postage on email to generate enough funds to extend Internet access to all peoples of the world. It is more than likely that any funds generated by such a scheme would be quickly swallowed up in its management.

Chapter 2 considers the role of education in a world reduced to the size of a village by technology. This chapter draws heavily on Bill Gates' book 'The Road Ahead' (1995) on the future of information and communications technology. The issues touched upon range from the sublime to the mundane – from the deschooling of education and the changing role of the teacher in a world where cyberspace is as easily accessible from inside as outside the classroom, to the more prosaic problem of ever heavier school knapsacks and how digital media can both lighten the weight and save our forests. The arguments are not new, but are lucidly and simply stated. The intended audience is the school teacher, and the authors seem to make a special effort to address concerns which to the academic may appear trivial but which are a way of life to the practising teacher.

Chapter 3, an essay by Moacir Gadotti, director of the Paolo Freire institute of Sao Paolo, gives an account of Internet- and Web-based distance learning. Again, the tone is openly optimistic – only at the very end of the chapter does the author focus briefly on social and pedagogical problems which this new technology brings with it. Like Telleri, Gadotti is addressing the non-specialist, and his arguments are simple, direct and largely lacking technical detail.

The second half of the book, starting with chapter 4, presents the *IperComenius* software as a concrete embodiment of most of the principles expounded in the previous chapters. The idea itself is good except for one major

flaw: it is too grandiose to be realisable by any single piece of software such as this. The *IperComenius* software suffers from a number of serious design shortcomings which render it virtually useless for its intended application – for example, there seems to be no mechanism for sharing resources amongst teachers except by physically sharing the computer. A resource management system meant to support networking and team teaching really only makes sense in the context of an Internet or Intranet. The software itself is awkward to use and very user-hostile. Moreover, a number of basic features are missing, most notably the ability to include images and media files in the teaching materials section: ironic in a product touted to be an 'open-ended multimedia encyclopaedia'.

All in all, the first part of the book succeeds in bringing together a variety of strands from current pedagogic theory and informatics in a very readable and down to earth style. The approach aims for breadth rather than depth – understandable given the intended audience. In my view the authors tend to get carried away with their enthusiasm for the new technologies, only rarely acknowledging that the technology may as well serve to enslave as to liberate. Unfortunately the publication is let down by the accompanying software – it is poorly designed, with little thought for how it will really be used in practice, and poorly implemented.

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Extended Review Essay

A Daughter of Isis: The Autobiography of Nawal El-Saadawi, by Nawal
El-Saadawi (translated from Arabic by Sherif Hetata). London:
Zed Books, Ltd., 1999, 294 pp. (ISBN 1-85649-680-5 paper)

Written in a very warm, intimate, emotionally engaging style, witty, sarcastic,
optimistic, and insightful, *A Daughter of Isis* is truly a book for everyone. At the
age of seventy, Dr. El-Saadawi is at the height of her life's work, with the energy
and enthusiasm of a teenager. Her autobiography is an exemplary reflection of her
ideas, her goals, her struggles, and her life's journey.

A Daughter of Isis offers its readers insight into the author's struggle for
authenticity, for autonomy within community, and for social justice. These are
struggles which concern millions of people world-wide, particularly in countries
which have been colonized by Western powers and/or remain caught in the web
of the neo-imperialist global capitalist system. The development of Dr. El-
Saadawi's identity as an authentic individual having a genuine sense of solidarity
with family and community, despite the diversity of views which led to constant
struggle and conflict, is not only fascinating at the psychological level, but inspires
the reader to see the need for social *engagement* and social justice. After all, our
actions in our everyday lives either contribute to the *status quo* or to social change.
The recent horrific terrorist attacks on the United States of America have shocked
many people into re-evaluating their values, their goals, and their lives in general.
The obvious lesson in all of this is that until there is true social justice, terrorism
will continue to flourish all over the world. Until then, no one is safe, literally.

One positive outcome of the terrorist attack on the U.S.A. is the sudden and
dramatic awareness of the need for solidarity and community. Gone is the focus
on alienation and anomie, long considered common themes in North American
education and social science circles. Usually linked to the rise of materialism and
decline of spirituality, the loss of community, and the rise of self-centered
individualism in the West, alienation and anomie were as much a part of Dr. El-
Saadawi's early life in rural Egypt as they are today. *A Daughter of Isis* reveals
that these are universal concerns with a long history. Nawal El-Saadawi reveals
the alienation and anger she felt as a young child towards her relatives and
her society in general. She strongly opposed many of the social norms because
she believed that they underpinned the omnipresent oppression and exploitation
of most Egyptians, resulting in widespread ignorance, sickness, poverty, and
misery. Her life's goal was to escape this misery and make a positive contribution
to her society.

Dr. El-Sadaawi's rebellion was not simply against her parents' authority; it was rebellion against an unjust, undemocratic society. She rebelled against unjust relatives, peers, teachers, neighbours, bureaucrats, and politicians. In doing so, she was able to strike out on a path very different from that of her other female relatives as well as most girls and young women her age. Fortunate to have some positive female role models, Nawal El-Saadawi rejected the gender norms and roles of her day to become an independent, professional woman of international fame.

Here it is obvious that teachers have an immense influence on their students. "...[A] teacher in school to us was like a god" (p. 215). Because most of her teachers were unthinking supporters of the *status quo*, Nawal El-Saadawi rebelled against the most stifling aspects of her schooling. "What I could not stand was the teacher, the rules of grammar, and religion. These three things were capable of killing any budding talent" (p. 216).

However, teachers, like others, have the choice of supporting or challenging social norms which limit the development and freedom of individuals. Nawal El-Saadawi was fortunate enough to have some teachers who were strong role models. They, too, valued education and independence above ignorance, dependency, and conformity to unjust social norms. They inspired the young Nawal to pursue her creative endeavours, and to study at university. Indeed, she wrote her first novel at age fourteen, and has since written more than forty. She was able to develop her interests in spite of the societal barriers faced by women at that time, in part, because of a few strong female teachers. Her becoming one of the first female students to be admitted to the Medical School at Cairo University is part of their legacy.

The price paid to exercise one's independence against the wishes of the authorities, of course, varies greatly from society to society. Dr. El-Saadawi was fortunate to have a father who was strongly opposed to the Turco-Albanian monarchy and British control over Egypt. His price was denial of career opportunities in the Ministry of Education and being marginalized as a school inspector in his own poor, rural village. It was a price paid by his entire family.

> "My father's dreams were different. He wanted to liberate his country from colonial rule, free himself from the bondage of his government job, become a poet, or a writer. He died without achieving any of these, without writing anything, lived a life of semi-exile in faraway corners of the country with nothing to keep him going except his love for his family and an inner pride, the feeling that he had never given up, had always struggled for what he believed was right." (p. 6)

Al-Sayed Habash El-Saadawi's love for learning, however, was tempered by his more compliant acceptance of gender. His dilemma was that Nawal's older brother was far less successful at school. As the eldest of six sisters, Nawal opened their path to secondary and post-secondary education, one that was denied her female cousins. It was Nawal's mother who enabled her daughters to defy gender conformity.

The importance of a mother's education and attitudes about education for girls is recognized by sociologists of education as critical in the educational achievement of children, particularly girls. It is noteworthy that Dr. El-Saadawi's mother, Zaynab, was the first and most important supporter of her education. In fact, it was her mother who set her course in life.

Although Zaynab came from the ruling Turco-Albanian class – indeed, her father was a Bey – her family had fallen into gentile poverty. She was married off at the age of fifteen to a man sixteen years her elder who came from the lowest class, the peasantry. Dr. El-Saadawi's father, Al-Sayed, was the first man to leave his village of farmers in a suit. He had succeeded in rising to the middle class through educational achievement and spent his entire working life as a civil servant fighting to extend education to all Egyptians.

Perhaps because she was forced to stop her education, Zaynab Hanem Mahmoud Shoukry was determined that her daughters would not be denied higher education. Nawal (p. 6) recounts her mother's regrets in life, indicating that they had a profound effect on her:

> "My mother was not a doctor, or a writer. She had no job, no income of her own, no place in which she could live apart from her husband's home... [but] Mother had a happy life in many ways. She was not like the other women in the family. She regretted being just a housewife. Ever since her early school days she had dreamed of other things..."I wanted to be a musician, and play music, or to finish my education and find a place where I could experiment and invent something useful. I dreamt of galloping on a horse to the horizon, of riding in an aeroplane to see the world, but your grandfather Shoukry took me out of school and married me off to your father."

Even though Zaynab died at the age of 45, she lived to see all of her daughters educated. The many sacrifices made by Nawal Saadawi's parents in order that their nine children receive a good education is eye-opening to many Westerners who take good quality education and a much higher standard of living for granted. It also highlights the importance, however, of cooperation between parents and

teachers in the education of children. Teachers are much more effective if they are aware of the circumstances and values of their students' families and if they can involve those families in the education of their children.

Nawal El-Saadawi's values, goals, and life path were born of the conflict she experienced within her family, community, and society. Being raised by families coming from opposite ends of the social spectrum introduced her to the many injustices still inherent in Egyptian society. As Nawal (p. 18) describes her parents' families:

First the family of Shoukry Bey, noble descendants of a lineage going back to the great Tala'at Pasha of Istanbul. Then the family of Al-Saadawi, from Kafr Tahla, with their dark, dusty faces, and the bare skin of their cracked heels looking out from under the hem of their long garments. The smell of mud and sweat in the threadbare *gallabiyas*, the long robes worn by peasants, mingled with the sweet scent of French perfumes in the flowing silk dresses and the smell of whiskey and dark tobacco rising from the foreign-cut suits made of English wool.

Another important aspect of this autobiography is Nawal El-Saadawi's struggle to understand and accept Islam as a religion valuing education and social justice. She rejected the dogmatic, literalist, patriarchal interpretation of Islam which was held by many of her relatives and is still commonly held in Egyptian society. Her recounting this journey is insightful and useful to readers, whether Muslim or not, particularly in light of the recent terrorist attacks in the U.S.A. by militant Islamic fundamentalists. The interpretation of Islam held by these terrorists is neither reflective of nor condoned by most educated religious scholars throughout the Muslim world. Thankfully, Western politicians and military leaders have emphasized that their impending war on terrorism is not a war on Islam. Most Muslim states have made it clear that this is a struggle against those who misuse the concept of *ji had* and commit acts of terror against civilians.

Given the numerous protracted wars waging around the world today, and the fact that most warring groups claim to have "God" on their side, it is absolutely necessary for political, military, and religious leaders of all faiths to oppose war and work actively towards a peaceful settlement. Peace is only secured if it is based on social justice.

Westerners should not fall into the false dichotomization of faith and reason so typical of modernity and which has more recently been seriously challenged by post-modernists. Some of the ancient Greek philosophers, great Islamic philosophers, and Jesus Christ himself have not fallen into this trap of the false dichotomy. Dr. El-Saadawi remembers her illiterate grandmother resisting unjust officials saying, "We are not slaves and Allah is just. People have come to know that through reason" (p. 7).

Nawal El-Saadawi reminds us that setting reason and the rational against faith and emotion is used by patriarchal religions and societies as a basis for subordinating and discriminating against Others, particularly women. It is also used to pit West against East, North against South, urban against rural. Not only is this a false dichotomy, it is a very destructive one for human beings. In addition, lack of religious freedom and domination by a state-sanctioned religion is the case in most countries and would be true in practice even if not strictly in law. This is an important factor when discussing religious values in general, and even more so in terms of state education.

Nawal El-Saadawi provides great insight into this and many other significant issues which arose during her school days. The reality of diversity of views amongst students, parents, teachers, administrators, and politicians is really no different for Nawal than it is for many of us in other countries today. Nawal's experience navigating through and learning from this diversity is fascinating and instructive for all readers.

Schools are a microcosm of society, and Nawal El-Saadawi discovered that she faced many of the same issues, challenges, and barriers throughout her life, whether as a student, a psychiatrist in private practice, a university professor, a deputy minister of health, a writer, or a human rights activist. Imprisoned and exiled for her advocacy of human rights for all Egyptians, demonised by many in the Arab world for her unfailing support of women's rights in Islam, and misunderstood by many Westerners, Dr. Nawal El-Saadawi is an inspiration for all of us to work more diligently for social justice in our own communities as well as in partnership with others. As Nawal learned from her father, "Allah is our conscience which tells us we have done something wrong when we do not stand up for justice. God's voice comes to us from our depths and not from the pulpit of the mosque" (p. 7).

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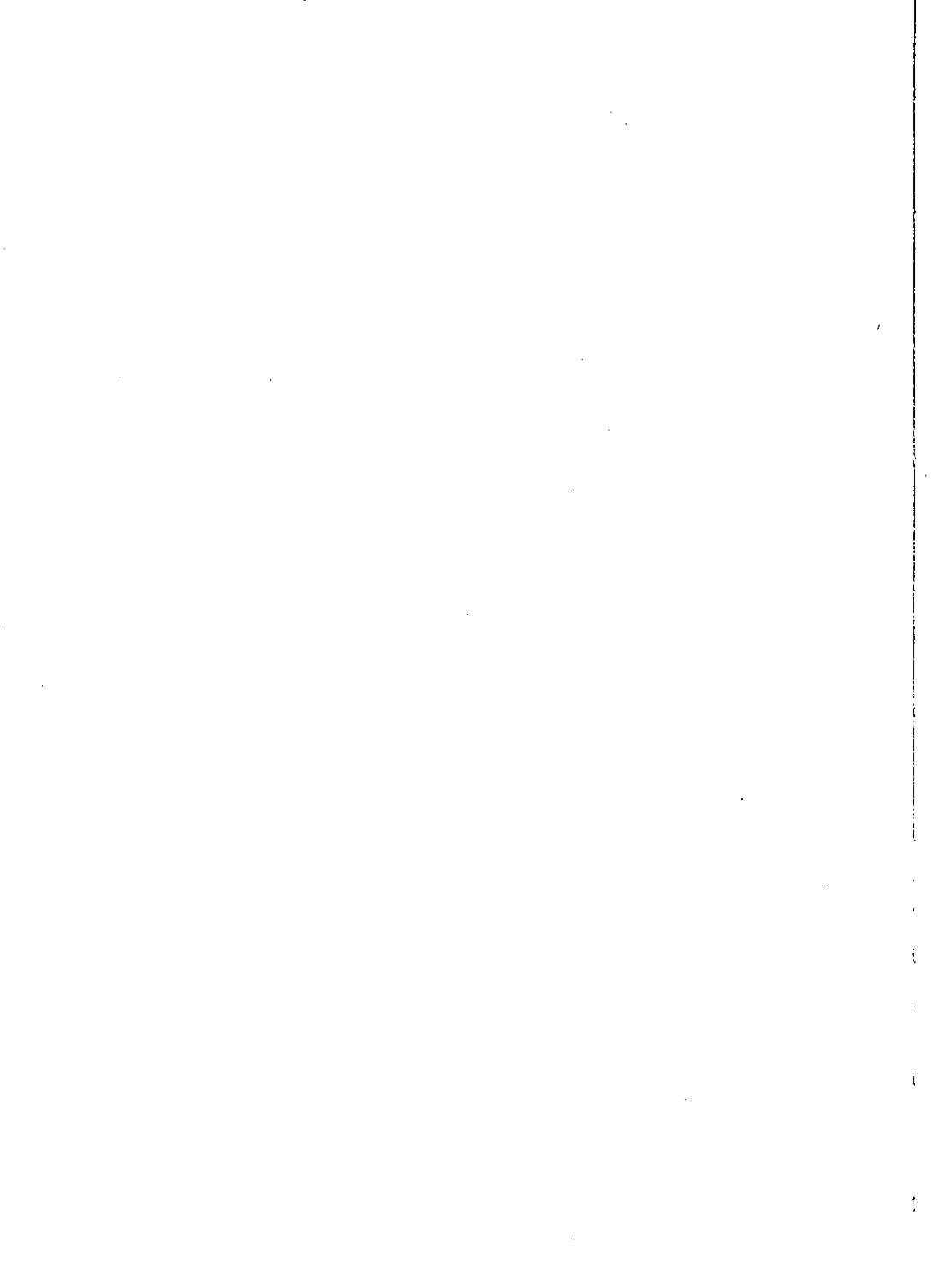
CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

1-3 November 2001: **Learning and the Brain.** Themes: teaching and learning, brain research, cognition. Conference venue: MIT. Conference url: http://www.edupr.com Conference organisers: Public Information Resources, Inc. (PIRI). Email enquiries: learning_brain@yahoo.com Telephone enquiries: 617-469-6789 x 21

2-4 November 2001: **25th Annual CARN Conference 2001.** Themes: Action research in social care, social work, nursing, community health, interprofessional work and teaching curriculum development and management in school, colleges and universities. Conference venue: Low Wood Hotel, Windermere, Cumbria. Conference organisers: St. Martin's College, Lancaster and Carlisle. Email enquiries: a.nicholson@ucsm.ac.uk

10-11 November 2001: **Learning & Caring - Exploring the Future.** Conference venue: The Moller Centre, Cambridge. Conference organisers: National Association of Pastoral Care in Education. Email enquiries: napce@warwick.ac.uk

12-14 November 2001: **Universities and Regional Development in the Knowledge Society.** Conference venue: Technical University of Catalonia, Barcelona. Email enquiries: unescogestio@rectorat.upc.es Conference url: http://www.upc.es/unescogestio/castella/congresos/congresos.htm

28-30 November 2001: **7th International Conference on Technology Supported Learning & Training.** Themes: eLearning, Educational Technologies. Conference venue: Hotel InterContinental, Berlin. Conference url: www.online-educa.com

6-8 December 2001: **13th Annual EAIE Conference.** Themes: International education: realising human potential. Conference venue: Tampere Hall and the University of Tampere. Conference url: www.eaie.org Email enquiries: eaie@eaie.nl

12-14 December 2001: **Excellence, Enterprise & Equity: competing challenges for HE.** Conference url: http://www.srhe.ac.uk/annualconf2001/cambridge1.htm Conference organisers: Society for Research into Higher Education. Email enquiries: srheoffice@srhe.ac.uk

11-12 January 2002: **The New Higher Education? Learning and Teaching in a "Knowledge Society".** Organiser's url: http://www.c-sap.bham.ac.uk Notes: Email enquiries: enquiries@c-sap.bham.ac.uk

1-3 February 2002: Unprincipled Passions: Emotion And Modernity. Conference venue: John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton. Conference organisers: Mr. Ronald Cowdery.Organiser's address: John Hansard Gallery, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton SO17-1BJ. Email enquiries: rvc@soton.ac.uk

25-27 March 2002: UACE 2002 Annual Conference, **'Learning from Practice: Modernising local lifelong learning.'** Conference venue: University of Bath. Conference url: http://www.bath.ac.uk/iohm/uace.htm Email enquiries: k.thomas@bath.ac.uk

7-9 April 2002: **IVETA - TEND 2002.** Themes: Bridging the Divide – Strategies for Change. Conference venue: Jumeriah Beach Hotel, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Conference url: http://crm:hct.ac.ae/tend2002 Conference organisers: Higher Colleges of Technology, IVETA. E-mail enquiries:tend@hct.ac.ae

0-13 April 2002: **Researching Drama and Theatre in Education.** Themes: research through practice, drama as practice, practice as research and practice based research. Conference venue: School of Education, University of Exter, Devon. Conference url: http://www.exeter-conference.co.uk Conference organisers: School of Education Conference Office. Organiser's url: http://www.exeter-conference.ac.uk Email enquiries: H.E.Olek@exeter.ac.uk

10-12 April 2002: **Enhancing curricula: exploring effective curricula practices in art, design & communication in HE.** Conference venue: RIBA, London, UK. Conference url: http://www.cltad.ac.uk Email enquiries: f.lam@linst.ac.uk or cltad@linst.ac.uk

12-14 April 2002: **Discourse Power Resistance in Post-Compulsory Education and Training.** Conference venue: Robbins Centre and Cookworthy Building, University of Plymouth. Email enquiries: pfenn@plymouth.ac.uk

Notes for Contributors

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All contributors should be aware they are addressing an international audience. They should also use non-sexist, non-racist language, and a guide sheet is available in this regard.

Manuscripts, preferably between 6,000 and 8,000 words in length, should be sent to the Editor *MJES*, Ronald G. Sultana, Faculty of Education, University of Malta, Msida MSD 06, Malta, accompanied by an abstract of between 100-150 words. The abstract should be provided in English, the author's mother tongue, and possibly Arabic and French. Research Notes, Project Reports, and Comments (1,500 to 3,000 words in length) are also welcome.

Three complete copies of the manuscript should be submitted, typed double-spaced on one side of the paper. A diskette version of the article (preferably formatted on Word for Windows) should be included with the manuscript. It is essential that the full postal address, telephone, fax and email coordinates be given of the author who will receive editorial correspondence, offprints and proofs. Authors should include a brief autobiographic note. To enable the refereeing procedure to be anonymous, the name(s) and institution(s) of the author(s) should not be included at the head of the article, but should be typed on a separate sheet. The surname of the author/s should be underlined.

Figures and tables should have their positions clearly marked and be provided on separate sheets that can be detached from the main text.

References should be indicated in the text by giving the author's name followed by the year of publication in parentheses, e.g. '...research in Mahmoudi & Patros (1992) indicated...', alternatively this could be shown as '....research (Mahmoudi & Patros 1992) showed...'. The full references should be listed in alphabetical order at the end of the paper using the following formula:

Book: Surname, Name initials (date of publication) *Title of Book.* Place of Publication: Publisher.

Article in Journal: Surname, Name initials (date of publication) Title of article, *Title of Journal*, Volume(issue), pages.

Chapter in Book: Surname initial/s, Name initials (date of publication) Title of chapter. In Name initials and Surname of (editor/s) *Title of Book.* Place of Publication: Publisher.

Particular care in the presentation of references would be greatly appreciated, and ensure earlier placement in the publication queue.

Proofs will be sent to the author/s if there is sufficient time to do so, and should be corrected and returned immediately to the Editor. 25 offprints of each article will be supplied free of charge together with a complete copy of the journal issue.

The Editorial Board welcomes suggestions for special issues of the *MJES* dedicated to a special theme.

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